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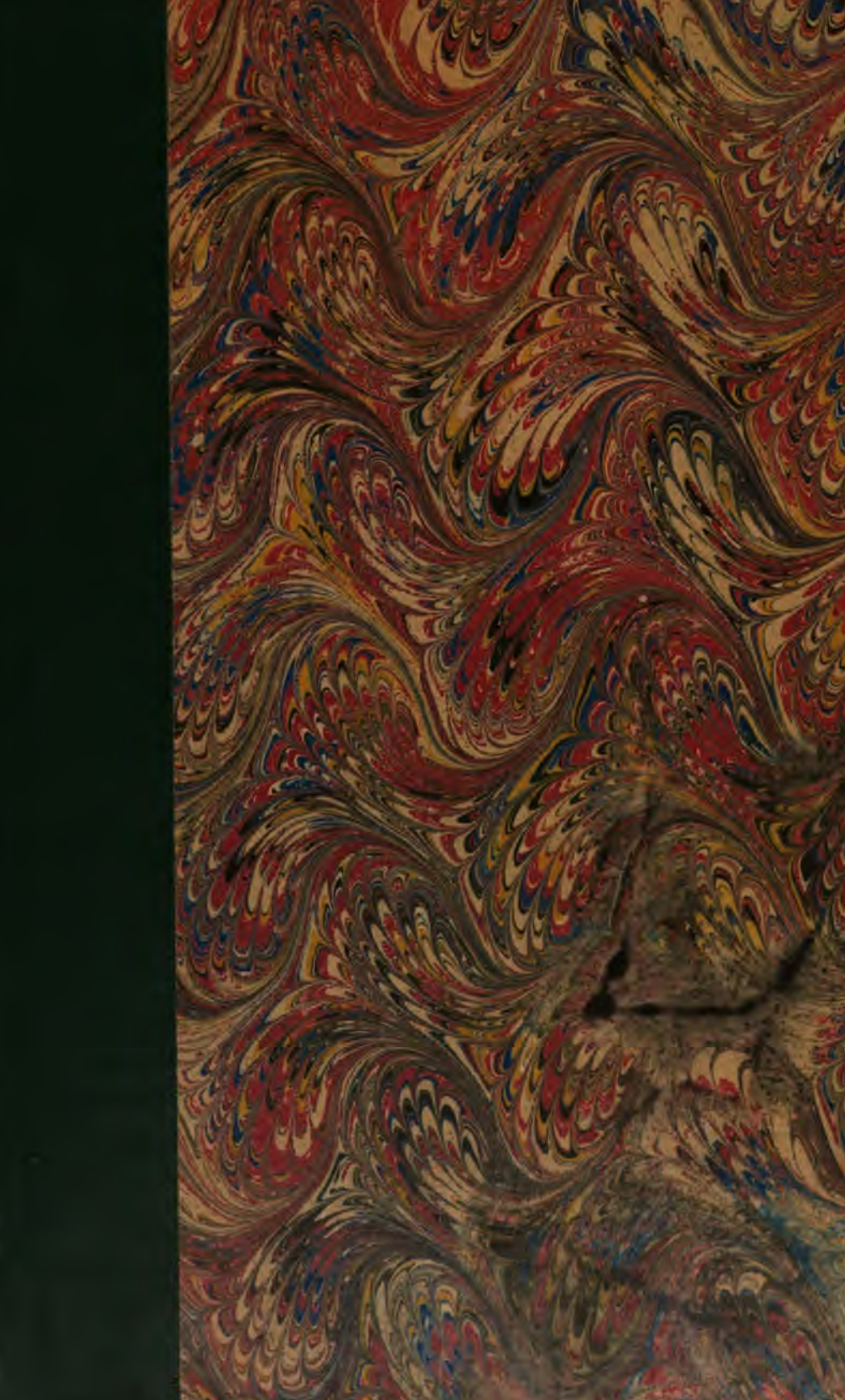

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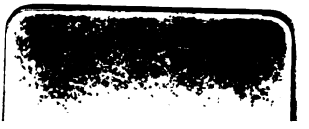

To Mr Kirchhofer
with the translators
respectful compliments.

Caledonia, Cove of Cork
Sept. 18th 1833.

MARY STUART,

A TRAGEDY.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS,

A TRAGEDY.

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

SCHILLER,

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE REV. H. SALVIN, M. B.

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SKETCH

OF

The Life of Frederick Schiller.

It is a subject of complaint, too well founded, that so little is known of the personal history of some of the most illustrious authors, and that while their genius and writings have shed lustre upon the land which gave them birth, and done honour to human nature, the gratitude of their countrymen in after ages has often been condemned to exert itself in fruitless efforts to rescue from oblivion the history of their lives. That this neglect should have happened in the infancy of letters cannot excite our wonder. The value of such information was not known till the means of securing it to posterity was irrecoverably lost. Of the incidents of Homer's life scarce any memorials now remain, except those trifling notices which are scattered throughout his own writings, and we are obliged to collect, or rather guess, at the age in which he lived, by a careful and laborious comparison of the names recorded, and the events alluded

to, in his works, with what we know of the early history of Greece from other sources. But to come nearer to our own times, and to take examples from our own countrymen. How little is known to us of the father of English poetry, Chaucer! and how meagre are the accounts transmitted to us even of Shakspeare himself; how insufficient to gratify that eager curiosity which we feel to be informed of the minute particulars of his personal history, and to be made acquainted with his domestic habits, his manners, shape, and features! As we approach our own times, the deficiencies of personal biography become less, and the reproach, which we throw upon former ages for their negligence in this respect, has, in some instances, been converted into one of an opposite nature—that the lives of eminent men have been ransacked with too much minuteness, and the public overloaded with details of their actions, which might as well have been consigned to oblivion.

Happily we have no reason to complain of want of information respecting the illustrious person who is the subject of our present researches; his countrymen have been too sensible of the glory which his writings have shed around the annals of their literature, to allow us to remain in ignorance of any material fact connected with the life and history of the man whom they are proud to consider as the rival of Shakspeare, of whose genius he was so enthusiastic an admirer.

But before proceeding to detail the events of his life, it may not be uninteresting to give a short sketch

of the sudden change which took place in the state of German literature about this period, and which in the course of about thirty years, from 1740 to 1770, carried it by a few rapid steps from a state of comparative barbarism to refinement.*

The Germans, before this, had long possessed the reputation of being the most learned people in Europe. They were deeply skilled in the sciences, and studied the languages of all nations, of which, by their unwearied labour, they became the teachers in so many branches of human knowledge. But with all these advantages their men of learning were pedants.—With them learning supplanted genius, and those very men, who might be said to live more in Athens and Rome than in Germany, were unacquainted with the principles of good taste. To this disadvantage was joined that of an uncultivated language. It first became cultivated—its beauty, its copiousness, and energy first acknowledged, when the poets enlivened it with the rays of their immortal genius, exhibited it in every form, and courted the Muse in every species of verse. At the same period those gigantic strides were atchieved in the fields of science, of which foreign nations, from their defective acquaintance with the language, were not in a condition to form an opinion. During this epoch Germany was torn and convulsed by the two celebrated wars of Frederick the Second of Prussia; in the former of which

* See Bouterwek's Geschichte der Deutschen Poesie und Beredsamkeit.

Silesia was dismembered from Austria, and in the latter, Prussia had to combat for her independence against the formidable league of all the greater powers of Europe, and during which so many other intellectual powers were unfoldéd and called into action by the most extraordinary excitements. Perhaps in no nation was a revolution of this nature brought about in a quicker or more wonderful manner: and those political convulsions, which in ordinary times arrest the career of literary improvement, seem rather to have had a favourable influence upon that which we are now describing. Whilst the German leaders of armies, Frederick, Ferdinand, Daun, and Landohn, gave their dreadful lessons to Europe, amidst the thunder of their cannon, the German Winckelmann, with equal courage and success, dived into the labyrinths of antiquity to reduce into order the chaos of ancient art, Euler applied the profound investigations of the calculus to complete and extend the Newtonian theory of the planetary motions, and Mengs became the Raphael of the 18th century.—Artists multiplied in all parts of Germany, and displayed their talents in gems, medals, and copperplates. In this manner the German Muses called forth the arts amidst the din of arms, and the lyre of the poet, the pencil of the painter, and the tool of the engraver, became entwined with the laurels of the warrior.

This revolution extended itself to every department of the human intellect. At the same period, when

the art of war was carried to so high a degree of perfection, the German theologists began to use a more enlightened and rational phraseology in their discourses from the pulpit, and lectures in the universities. German criticism, till now cramped and fettered by the pedantic school of Gottsched, commenced a new and brilliant career. The civilians exchanged their barbarous terms for others more intelligible, and introduced philosophy into the temple of Themis. The physicians ceased to display their Greek learning by the bed-side of the patient, and began to speak and write in a manner which their readers and hearers could understand. The natural historians, though they had no names to place in competition with those of Linnæus and Buffon, could yet reckon at this period several respectable writers, whose labours gave no unpromising presage of what was afterwards to be effected in this department of science by the genius of a Werner.

But above all the career of the poets was the most splendid. The new day-star of German poetry was ushered in by the effusions of Haller, Hagedorn, Utz, and Gellert. Their admirable compositions, however, were, for the most part, lost upon an uncultivated public. At last a better æra arose, in which so many wonderous adventures roused even the most indolent in all parts of Germany, if not to activity, at least to take an interest in the events which were passing around them; and now Klopstock, Wieland, and Lessing appeared—three names destined to place

on a firm foundation the national fame of German genius, not only with their contemporaries, but still more with future ages. Of these Klopstock * was the first who began to delight his countrymen with the charms of his verse. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest, most original, and most amiable poets who have ever lived in any age or nation; and the stile of his composition being purely national, brought about the greatest revolution which had happened in German poetry since the days of Opitz. The three first books of his Messiah appeared when he was only 24 years old, and never did any poem excite so great an interest in the public mind. His genius created, out of materials which had exercised the labours of many preceding poets, a new world, in which personages long known are represented in new lights and new relations by the inspiration of poetry. Whoever is inclined to consider him as a mere imitator of Milton, must be unacquainted with the essential difference between the style of the Messiah and that of the Paradise Lost. The originality of Klopstock's poetry does not consist so much in the invention of incidents, as in the manner in which his imagination works up his materials, and gives to each word a significance, by which he is enabled to express the depth of his feeling. His poetry seems to issue from the innermost soul of the poet, but his enthusiasm is always under the command of a manly understanding, and is far removed from the romantic, which only amuses

* Born 1723—died 1803.

the fancy, but gives little exercise to the judgment.—His fervent admiration of the Greek and Roman authors, in whose writings he was deeply versed, induced him to form both his metre and language upon their models. Patriotism was, next to religion, the predominant feeling of his heart, and co-operated with his love of the ancients in inciting him to improve the German language by a poetical phraseology till then unknown. The hexametral verse in which the Messiah is composed had formerly been attempted by some of the older German poets, as by Fischart, but their barbarous imitations of the Greek metre had long fallen in oblivion; and Klopstock may, with that restriction, justly claim the merit of the invention.—Amongst the lyric poets Klopstock is, perhaps, entitled to a higher place than amongst the epic. But notwithstanding all the various merits, which have raised him to so high a rank among the German classics, he has not entirely reached the aim at which he aspired. In his poems he has often miscarried, and much is marred by over-refinement. His striving always to say much in a few words often gives a mannerism to his poetry; and the effect is still more unpleasing, where one and the same thing is repeated over and over in many words, because the poet cannot refrain from expressing what is inexpressible. But perhaps these failings may be traced to that profound knowledge of language, and depth of feeling, without which Klopstock would never have risen to the elevation, at which his contemporaries have rather wondered at than understood him.

Wieland was nine years younger than Klopstock, and the tone and spirit of their writings stand in direct contrast to each other. While Klopstock carried the poetry of invisible things almost to an over-strained extravagance, Wieland delights in the gay imagery which is addressed to the senses, and denounces war against every thing which requires too great an exertion of thought. But his poetry is not always secure from reprehension on the score of its immorality.—He had unhappily imbibed his philosophy in the school of the French sensualists, at the head of whom stood Helvetius, and thought himself privileged to introduce any ideas which are not opposed to the laws of taste and ideal beauty. Hence his writings are too often disfigured by a licentiousness of imagery, which in the hands of his numerous imitators degenerates into the most revolting grossness. It seems to have been Wieland's aim to free German literature from the rigid criticism, with which the school of Gottsched had oppressed it, and give to their composition a freedom of thought, without which poetry of certain kinds cannot attain its end. In opposition to the poetry of Klopstock, that of Wieland had, in some respects, a favourable influence upon the German taste, by destroying the opinion that the soul of the poet ought always to be more in heaven than on earth. Never did satire wield more polished arms, than those employed in Wieland's writings against those fanciful reveries, to which the German nation is perhaps more prone than any other. But he cannot be considered as a national German poet in the strict sense of the

word, because he himself, in common with his countrymen at that time, did not possess the views necessary to form that character. He endeavoured to mould his taste and habits of thinking upon the model of the ancient Greek authors, and with this he mixed up so much of the French style, which he imbibed with their philosophy, that he obtained, both in Germany and out of it, the name of the German Voltaire, though their writings have so little affinity. He does not possess any striking degree of originality, but borrows from the writers of all countries; and these materials he seizes upon, and blends so harmoniously with the spirit and style which is peculiarly his own, as to raise him above all other poets who are chiefly distinguished by their talents for imitation. He seems most to admire and imitate the writings of Lucian, Cervantes, and Ariosto. His muse is always rather inclined to smile than to laugh. Such invincible cheerfulness, combined with such a knowledge of human nature,—such refined wit, taste, and fulness of fancy, clothed in such a soft, luxurious, and apparently negligent style, is not to be found in any other poet. It was from him that the Germans first became acquainted with the graces of playfulness and irony. —It may be interesting to the English reader to add, that Wieland published, between 1762 and 1766, a translation of Shakspeare, who till then was hardly known even by name in Germany.

After Klopstock and Wieland no writer has contributed more to the reformation of German literature

than Lessing, born in 1729. In him nature had united, in a remarkable degree, the materials of a poet, a philosopher, and a man of learning. He was himself modest enough to renounce all pretensions to poetic genius, being conscious that his fancy could only walk by those rules of art, which his clear understanding pointed out to him. But he allowed no rule to be valid which was not founded upon nature and reason; and when he had discovered those rules, his fancy followed in their train. As a proof of this, it was not uncommon for him to say that his play was finished, when he had fully sketched the plan of it, scene by scene. With every step which he advanced in the art of criticism, his dramatic compositions gained fresh life and strength. Every succeeding play excels those that went before. It is, however, only in dramatic poetry and criticism that Lessing has rendered any service to the literature of his country. His passion for theatrical composition, which shewed itself in his early youth, continued till his death; and he would have excelled in it still more, if he had not been infected with the false *naturalism* of Diderot. For this reason all his tragedies are in prose, with the exception of "Nathan the Wise," the last and best of his dramatic productions, and composed in rhimeless Iambics, a metre which, after Lessing's example, soon became naturalized on the German stage. The subjects are mostly chosen from common life, as in the English tragedy of George Barnwell, to which species of tragic

composition the reproach is justly applied, that they have no beauty or elevation of style to compensate for the painful interest which they create, and leave behind them no genuine poetic impression. He wrote six comedies, of which the last only, "Minna von Barnhelm," is a work of distinguished merit.

But the most important service which Lessing rendered to German literature is to be found in his prose writings. In these (especially in his Hamburgische Dramaturgie) he labours to wean the minds of his countrymen from their servile imitation of the French school; and to prove, what no one had attempted before him, that the French tragediana, in their close imitation of the Grecian model, have been guided by a mistaken view of the subject, and confounded the unimportant adjuncts, with the essentials of tragedy. He seized also every occasion to turn the attention of the Germans to the works of Shakspeare, and to recommend Wieland's translation of this greatest of all dramatic writers, as a most important accession to German literature. The attacks, which he made upon the prevailing prepossession in favour of the French models, were seconded by the political relations in which Germany then stood. Frederick II. of Prussia was engaged in a war with the House of Austria, which had called to its assistance the troops of France. The soldiers, by whom Frederick gained his victories, were Germans, and a part of their renown in arms was reflected back upon the German name. To the feelings of

a true German it could never be a matter of indifference, that the Empress Maria Theresa should wish to annihilate the Prussian monarchy with the help of the French, the ancient foes of the German empire. In the north of Germany especially, a new antipathy was awakened against the French, which, after the battle of Rosbach, gave place to contempt. This national German feeling could not long exist without an influence upon literature. How much soever Frederick himself might be attached to the French in matters of taste, the German critics, who till then had bowed in submission to those of France, now sought to enter the lists against them. It soon became a fashion among the German authors, who began to multiply in abundance, to declare war against French criticism, as Frederick had done against the French arms. The alliance between Prussia and England, accidentally at least, promoted the study of English literature in Germany; and it became every day more a matter of observation, that the German taste is naturally more allied to the English than the French. It deserves here to be remarked, as highly honourable to the spirit of the nation, that the German poets and authors pursued their course with the most manly resolution, from their own resources, and without being indebted to the patronage of the great. The contempt, in which Frederick, the Prussian monarch, held German literature, was a sufficient reason for the lesser Princes, who were all his servile imitators, to give themselves

no concern about it. The king had formed his opinion of German literature from the state in which he found it on his accession to the throne, and could not be expected to foresee the rapid improvement it was about to make. He was a thorough disciple of the cold-hearted school of Voltaire, in taste as well as philosophy. With him wit and sense were every thing; fancy and feeling he considered only as subordinate. And it is, perhaps, fortunate for German literature, that he did not intermeddle with its concerns; for if he had interfered as a lawgiver upon his own principles of taste, he would only have contributed to give to it a false direction. The German poets thus acquired a greater spirit of independence and confidence in their own powers. It was indeed a severe mortification to Gleim, the Tyrtæus of Germany, that his king, whom he almost adored, would not notice, with any particular marks of favour, the war-songs which he had written in his praise; but he had too much of the German spirit to model his taste upon the demands which the king made upon the poets. Ramler, the German Horace, and Kleist, the poet of nature, maintained the same opinions, though both were as proud of their king as any other Prussian could be. And thus did German literature raise itself in all its branches by its own efforts, and in despite of its gainsayers, while one man of genius encouraged another, and the patriotic authors, though divided into parties upon lesser points, united as friends, where their views were directed to the same

national object. They formed a phalanx, as one man, against the flatterers and apish imitators of foreign countries.

It was in the midst of this revival and effervescence of the literary spirit in Germany, that Frederick Schiller was born at Marbach, a small town upon the Neckar, in the territory of Wirtemberg, on the 10th of November, 1759.*

The manners and habits of thinking, which prevailed in the paternal house, in which Schiller passed the years of his childhood, were not favourable to the developement of his intellectual powers, but highly so to the formation of his morals. His father was a man of great probity and piety, simple in his manners, without much information, but active and dexterous in business. In the year 1745 he went to the Netherlands as surgeon to a Bavarian hussar regiment, and the want of sufficient employment induced him to accept the appointment of subaltern officer, when small detachments were occasionally sent out. At the conclusion of the peace of Aix-la Chapelle, when a part of his regiment was disbanded, he returned to his native land, the duchy of Wirtemberg, where, in 1757, he was appointed ensign and adjutant in the regiment of Prince Louis. This regiment belonged

* This account of Schiller's life is chiefly taken from that written by Körner, of Berlin, an intimate friend of Schiller, and which was published soon after his death. Another work entitled "Schiller's Biographie und Anleitung zur Critik seiner Werke, bey Gräffer und Comp. 1810," has also been consulted.

to an auxiliary corps from Wirtemberg, which, in some campaigns of the seven years' war, formed a part of the Austrian army. After the year 1759 Schiller's father was attached to another Wirtemberg corps in Hesse and Lorraine, and employed his leisure hours in endeavouring to repair, by his own efforts, what had been neglected in his early education. A nursery for trees, which he planted near Ludwigsburg, after the end of the war, proved very flourishing, and he gave a further proof of his skill in this art, in a book entitled "Die Baumzucht im Grossen," ("The Rearing of Trees on a large Scale",) since reprinted in 1806. This induced the then Duke of Wirtemberg to commit to him the inspection of a larger plantation of the same kind, near one of the ducal castles, called the Solitude. In this situation he gave entire satisfaction, was esteemed by the Duke, and respected by all who knew him. He lived to a great age, and had the comfort of witnessing the fame of his son. In one of his manuscripts is to be found the following passage respecting his son:—"And "thou, greatest and first of Beings! to thee have I "prayed, after the birth of my only son, that thou "wouldest vouchsafe to grant to him those powers of "mind, which, for want of instruction, I could never "attain to, and thou hast heard me.—Thanks to "thee, best of Beings, that thou regardest the "prayers of mortals!" Schiller's mother is described by competent witnesses, as an unpretending, but sensible and good-humoured mother of a family. She was tenderly attached to her husband and children, and the warmth of her affections made her

much beloved by her son. She had little time for reading, but she was very fond of Utz and Gellert, especially as writers of religious poems. Such were Schiller's parents. Many traits are recorded of his earliest years, which give proofs of the tenderness of his heart, of deep religious feeling, and severe conscientiousness. He received his first rudiments of learning from the Reverend Mr. Moser, of Lorch, a border village of the Wirtemberg territory, where Schiller's parents lived three years after 1765. The son of this clergyman, who afterwards took holy orders, was Schiller's earliest friend; and this circumstance probably gave him his subsequent inclination for the same profession.

In 1768, the Schiller family returned to Ludwigsburg. There, for the first time, he saw, when nine years old, a theatre, as handsome as the state of Duke Charles's court could require. The effect upon his mind was powerful; a new world was opened to him, to which all his youthful sports had a reference; and he busied himself with plans of tragedies, but his inclination for holy orders was not diminished.

Till the year 1773 he remained at a large public school at Ludwigsburg; and one, who was then his school-fellow, remembers his cheerfulness—his bold and often petulant spirit, but at the time bears witness to his industry and elevated turn of thinking. The good testimonials of his teachers attracted the attention of the reigning duke, who was then zealously employed in founding a seminary of education, in filling which he wished to give the preference to the sons of his officers.

The option of placing his son in it was accordingly given to Schiller's father, and the refusal of such a favour could not be a matter of indifference. Nevertheless he openly avowed to the Duke his wish to dedicate his son to a profession, for which he could not be prepared in the new institution. The Duke was not offended, but desired him to choose another line of study. The family were thrown into great embarrassment; it cost Schiller himself a great effort to sacrifice his inclination to the relations in which his father stood with the court, but at last he decided for jurisprudence, and was in 1773 received into the new institution. This seminary was founded upon the principles of military discipline. Subordination, in the strictest sense, was the fundamental law; and upon all occasions, whether at their lessons, at table, at play, or at the hour of retiring to rest, the words of military command were always employed. In 1775, he seized an opportunity of giving up the study of jurisprudence, which had no attractions for him. A new school was opened in the institution, for the education of physicians: the Duke left to every pupil the choice of entering upon a medical course of study, and Schiller accepted the invitation.

In this institution the studies of the pupils were confined to a certain routine, and no deviation was allowed, as in most of the German academies, so that Schiller remained unacquainted with the greater portion of the literature of his country; but, for that reason, became more familiar with the works of a few

favourite authors, of whom the principal were Klopstock, Utz, Lessing, Goethe, and Gerstenberg.

It may easily be supposed, that the reformation, which had taken place in German poetry, and the attempts to shake off the reigning fashion of being satisfied with cold elegance, would powerfully affect such a mind as Schiller's. Hence his admiration of Goethe's "Goez von Berlichingen," and Gerstenberg's "Ugolino." He afterwards became acquainted with Shakspeare's writings, which he read in Wieland's translation.

As early as 1773 he had attempted to compose an epic poem, entitled "Moses," and not long after a tragedy, "Cosmus von Medicis," similar in substance to Leisewitz's "Julius of Tarent." Of this some passages were afterwards transplanted into "The Robbers."

About this time also, besides reading poetry, Schiller occupied himself, from his own voluntary impulse, with Plutarch's lives; and he found particular attractions in the writings of Herder and Garven. And it deserves also to be remarked, that he sedulously studied his native language in Luther's translation of the Bible; which is held by the Germans in such deservedly high estimation, that they have never permitted in it the alteration of a single word.

For two years he studied medicine with great earnestness, during which time he entirely renounced all poetical labours. At the end of this period he

composed a probationary essay, "upon the connexion between the physical and spiritual nature of man." The result was a speedy appointment as military physician to a regiment in the Duke of Wirtemberg's service, upon his leaving the academy in 1781. His contemporaries assert, that his medical practice was more distinguished by ingenuity and boldness than by success.

After the expiration of the time in which, by a solemn vow, he had renounced poetry, he returned to it with fresh eagerness. "The Robbers," and several single poems, which, together with some of the productions of his friends, he published under the title of "An Anthology," came out in the years 1780, 1781, which were the most important and decisive of his life.

Of "The Robbers" he himself speaks in the following terms, in one of the numbers of the German Museum for 1784:—"A strange mistake of nature "had destined me, from my birth, to be a poet. A "fondness for poetry was contrary to the laws of the "military institution in which I was brought up, and "opposed the plan of its founder. For eight years "my enthusiasm struggled with the military rule; "but a passion for poety is impetuous and lasting as "first love. What ought to have extinguished it, "gave it new force. To escape from a situation, "which to me was martyrdom, my heart roved into "the ideal world. But unacquainted with realities, "from which I was separated by iron bars,

"unacquainted with men—for the 400 human beings,
"who surrounded me, were to me but as so many
"repetitions of one and the same being--unacquainted
"with the beauteous sex, my pencil of necessity failed
"in the middle line between angels and dæmons, and
"produced a monster, which luckily is not to be met
"with in society, and to which I could only wish
"immortality, to eternize the example of a birth,
"which the unnatural union of genius and subordi-
"nation brought into the world—I mean 'The
"'Robbers.' This piece has made its appearance.
"A general outcry has been raised against it by the
"moral part of the community, who have accused
"the author of an attack upon majesty. His defence
"is the climate under which it was born, and that
"the author undertook to paint men two years before
"he was acquainted with them." And he adds the following remark, which sets in a strong point of view the radical defect in the construction of the plot:—
"Our pity becomes weakened, when the author of
"the misfortunes, whose innocent victim we com-
"passionate, fills our mind with abhorrence. The
"perfection of the piece sustains considerable injury,
"when the poet cannot compass his end without a
"villain, and when he is compelled to owe the excess
"of suffering, to the excess of villainy. Shakspeare's
"Iago and Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra in 'Roxalana,'
"and Franz Moor in 'The Robbers,' may serve as
"proofs of this assertion."

Schiller could find no publisher, who would

undertake to print "The Robbers," he was, therefore, obliged to do it at his own expence. It was consequently a greater satisfaction to him when in the year 1781, the Chamber-Counsellor, Schwan, a bookseller in Mannheim, desired him to prepare this work for the stage at that place. He received also, from Baron Dalberg himself, the manager of the Mannheim theatre, a similar proposal, including any future plays he might write. The conditions were drawn out in writing to the satisfaction of both the parties, and "The Robbers" was represented at Mannheim, in January, 1782. Schiller was himself present at this representation, and a second time in May of the same year; but he was obliged to set off secretly from Stuttgard, and his absence was discovered. An arrest of fourteen days was the consequence. At the same time another circumstance served to render Schiller's residence in Stuttgard still more unpleasant. A passage in "The Robbers," by which the people of Graubünden felt themselves offended, occasioned a complaint, and the Duke forbade Schiller to print any thing, which did not relate to medicine. This restriction was so much the more oppressive, as he began to form great hopes from the success of his first tragedy. His friends wished to contrive for him a mode of evading the prohibition, but Schiller could not bring himself to consent to it.

The representation of "The Robbers" in Mannheim, where the scenic art then stood in high repute, and especially Iffland's acting of Franz Moor, had an

ecstatic effect upon Schiller. His reception there promised him a delightful life as a poet, and he was unable to withstand the temptation. He did not, however, wish to leave Stuttgard without the Duke's permission. This he hoped to obtain by means of Baron Dalberg, and he wrote many pressing letters to beg his intercession. But he foresaw many difficulties which might arise—his impatience increased —he resolved upon flight, and chose for its execution a day in October, 1782, when every one in Stuttgard was busied with rejoicings for the arrival of the Archduke Paul of Russia.

He went to Frankfort under feigned names, and lived there almost a year, in the neighbourhood of Meinungen, at Bauerbach, an estate of a lady of the name of Wollzogen, for whose hospitable reception he was obliged to his connexion with her sons, who had studied with him at Stuttgard. Here, undisturbed and free from care, he devoted himself entirely to his poetical labours, the fruits of which were "The Conspiracy of Fiesko," a work which had been begun during his arrest at Stuttgard; "Cabal and Love;" and the first sketch of "Don Carlos." In September 1783, he quitted this residence to betake himself to Mannheim, where he entered into closer connexions with the theatre.

Here also he became a member of the then Palatine German Society, which consisted of a number of learned and ingenious men. In the year 1784, he undertook a periodical work entitled the "Rhenish

Thalia," and formed the first idea of preparing Shakspeare's "Macbeth" and "Timon" for the German stage. But it was "Don Carlos" which finally fixed his attention, and some scenes of it appeared in the first number of the Thalia.

The reading of those scenes at the court of the Landgrave of Hesse Darmstadt, was the occasion of Schiller's becoming known to the then reigning Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and being created his Counsellor. Such a distinction, from a prince so well versed in the belles lettres, and accustomed only to what was excellent, must have been a great encouragement to Schiller, and was attended afterwards with the weightiest consequences.

In March, 1785, he came to Leipzig. He was here received by friends whom his former productions had gained for him. Among these was Huber, whose early death he sincerely lamented. Schiller found his spirits raised, and passed a few of the summer months at Golis, a village near Leipzig, in a joyous circle of companions. It was here that he composed his "Song to Joy" (Lied an die Freude).

Towards the end of the summer, 1785, Schiller began his residence in Dresden, which lasted till July, 1787. Here he not only finished "Don Carlos," but gave to it an entirely new form. The success, which had attended the representation of his former pieces, and which might have confirmed the errors of a less powerful mind, had not blinded him to their defects. He became fully sensible of giving way to an

unrestrained impetuosity of imagination, in defiance of the sober rules of art, and applied himself with incredible perseverance to the cultivation of a purer taste. The work, which marks this era in his intellectual character, is "Don Carlos," which Schiller himself speaks of as the family picture of a royal house, and not a tragedy in the strict sense of the word. In this piece we perceive a master's hand in the delineation of the characters, and the plot is constructed with the highest degree of artificial contrivance, though the former extravagance of sentiment sometimes bursts forth, but in a more refined and chastized style. It is also the first play, which he composed in Iambic metre, having divested himself of the prejudices in favour of prose tragedy, which he had imbibed from the example of Lessing. His extreme desire to delineate correctly the character of Philip, induced him to peruse every work connected with his subject, and drew his attention to the most eventful period of his life, the revolt of the Netherlands.—This he determined at last to make the subject of an historical work, and began to collect materials for the composition. He formed the resolution also to publish an account of the most remarkable revolutions and conspiracies; of which only a part appeared of Schiller's composition. At that time Cagliostro played a part in France, which excited great attention, and from his history Schiller took the idea of writing the "Ghost-seer." This work was never finished; and perhaps the interest would be weakened if a

solution had been given of the marvellous incidents which it contains.

At Dresden, Schiller enjoyed the conversation of a very refined and highly cultivated circle of society. Many of those, with whom he at this time associated, looked upon him as a free-thinker; others, who knew him less, considered him as a secret adherent of Catholocism. It is probable enough, that in the early part of his life Schiller may have been a free-thinker, or he would not have used the following remarkable expressions, which we find in his works:—"Scepticism "and free-thinking," he says, "are the fever-pa- "roxysms of the soul; and by the unnatural and "painful agitation they create in well organized "minds, help to establish the moral health. The "more dazzling and seducing the error is, so much is "the triumph of truth the greater; the more painful "the doubt, the more do we look about for the means "to establish and strengthen our conviction." In the sense of these words, Schiller was a free-thinker, whose moral health was soon re-established; but he was never inclined to Catholicism, though in his theatrical works he seems so fond of displaying the imposing solemnities of the Catholic church.

In 1787 he went to Weimar. Goethe was then in Italy, but from Wieland and Herder he received the kindest reception. Also in 1787 Schiller was invited by the lady in Meinungen, who had so hospitably received him after his flight from Stuttgard, to pay her a visit. On this tour he remained some time

at Rudolstadt, where he formed some agreeable acquaintances, and saw, for the first time, his future wife, Miss Lengefeld. The neighbourhood of Rudolstadt had so many attractions for him that he determined to pass the summer of 1788 in that place. He staid from May till November, partly in Volkstädt, not far from Rudolstadt, partly in Rudolstadt itself, and saw daily the family of the lady of Lengefeld. In November he writes thus to a friend:—"It was very painful to me to leave Rudolstadt. I "have passed some very pleasant months there, and "formed some delightful friendships."

During his stay at Rudolstadt it happened that he saw Goethe for the first time. His expectations were wound up to the highest pitch, both from what he had known of him from his works, and from what he had heard of him in Weimar. Goethe appeared in a numerous party, gay and communicative, especially upon his Italian journey, from which he had just returned: but this composure and carelessness of manner made, at that time, an unpleasing impression upon Schiller, who sat opposite to him with a feeling of restless, impatient dissatisfaction.

In describing this meeting, he says, "Upon the "whole, the great idea I had formed of Goethe, is "not diminished after this interview, but I doubt if "we shall ever be very intimate. Much of what is "now interesting to me—of what I have to hope and "wish, is with him passed by. His whole being is "differently constructed from mine; his world is not

"mine; our modes of feeling are essentially different.
"But from such a meeting I can form no decided
"opinion. Time must show the rest."

And time showed in a few months, that Goethe at least neglected no opportunity of being useful to Schiller, whom he highly esteemed. When Professor Eichhorn left Jena, Schiller's work upon the "Revolt of the Netherlands from Spain," had just made its appearance, and gave great promise of what he was able to do in history; and Goethe and Voigt, the present privy counsellor, procured his appointment to the vacant Professorship, in the spring of 1789. He opened his course of lectures on history, in a very splendid manner; not less than 400 persons flocked to hear him. He now found himself called upon to decide, whether he would procure an independent subsistence by the practice of physic, or by devoting himself to history; and, after some hesitation, he gave the preference to the latter. About this time several distinguished individuals, and among others the Duke of Saxe Weimar, united their contributions to settle upon Schiller a fixed income, in addition to that which he might procure by his own exertions. To establish completely his domestic happiness, nothing else seemed wanting than the matrimonial union, which had long been the object of his wishes; and in February, 1790, he led to the altar the lady to whom he was ardently attached, Miss Lengefeld.

Some letters, which he wrote within a few months

afterwards, contain the following passages:—"It is "quite a different life which one leads by the side of "a beloved wife, than when alone and deserted.— "Now, for the first time, I really enjoy the beauties "of nature, and live in it. All around I see it "clothed in poetical forms, to which my heart beats "in unison.—What a delightful life do I now live! "I look round me with a joyous spirit, and my heart "feels a perpetual source of satisfaction without; my "mind a delightful nourishment and recreation.— "My existence flows on in harmonious evenness; "not passionately strained, but the days pass in quiet "serenity. I look forward with cheerfulness to my "future destiny; now that I am arrived at the "wished-for goal, I am myself astonished how every "thing has surpassed my expectations. From futu- "rity I hope for every thing. But a few years, and "I shall live in the full enjoyment of my intellectual "powers:—yes, I hope that I shall return again to my "youth; an inward poetic life brings it back to me."

But these visions of happiness were soon to experience a serious interruption. In the beginning of 1791, he was attacked with a severe indisposition in the chest, which undermined his health for the remainder of his life. Repeated relapses gave cause to fear the worst. His condition required the greatest care; it became necessary to give up his public lectures, and every other occupation which was attended with effort. While in this distressing situation, an unexpected aid was offered him from Denmark.—

From the then hereditary prince, afterwards reigning Duke of Holstein-Augustenberg, and from the Graf von Schimmelmann, Schiller received the offer of an annual payment of 3,000 dollars for three years, without any conditions, and merely for the recovery of his health; and this offer was made with such delicacy, that he felt himself more obliged by it, as he said, than by the offer itself. It was from Denmark that Klopstock was supplied with the means of an independent subsistence to finish his Messiah; and this generosity to Schiller was attended with the like happy results.

The entire recovery of his health it was in vain to expect, but the powers of his mind, being now freed from the pressure of external difficulties, triumphed over the weakness of his body. He forgot smaller inconveniences when he was employed in earnest study, and for years together he remained free from serious attacks. He had still many happy days to live; he enjoyed them with a cheerful mind; and of this disposition his country reaped the fruits in his best works.

During the first years of his residence in Jena, he lived upon the best terms with the men of learning in the place,—Paulus, Schütz, Hufeland, and particularly Reinhold, who became his most intimate friend. As a consequence of this, he could not fail to direct his attention to the philosophy of Kant, and he was much taken with it. What he particularly studied was the criticism of the judging powers (Kritik der

Urtheilskraft), and this led him into philosophic researches, of which he published the results in some numbers of "The Thalia."

In this period of his theoretic studies we find the following expressions in his writings:—"I have read "Aristotle's 'Poetics,' which, so far from disheartening me, or confining my ideas, have really given "me fresh strength and animation. To judge by the "painful manner in which the French understand "Aristotle, and seek to comply with his rules, one "expects in him a cold, stiff, illiberal lawgiver, and "finds just the contrary. He insists upon the essentials with firmness and precision; and respecting "the externals he is as lax as may be. What he "requires from the poet, the poet must require from "himself, if he knows what he is about; it follows "from the nature of the thing. Aristotle's 'Poetics' "treat almost exclusively of tragedy, which he favours "more than any other species of poetry. One may "observe that he forms his precepts upon a very extensive experience, and that he had in his eye a "prodigious multitude of tragic performances. His "book also contains absolutely nothing speculative—"no trace of any theory; every thing is empiric; but "the great number of cases, and the happy choice of "examples which he had in view, give to his empiric "decisions a general import and the complete nature "of laws."

Between the years 1790 and 1794, he does not appear to have composed any original poems, and

only his translations from Virgil belong to this period.

The history of the 30 Years War, which he undertook to compose for Goeschen's Historical Almanack after 1791, furnished him with materials for poetry, and he began to turn his thoughts to Wallenstein.

When, after the breaking out of the French revolution, the fate of Louis XVI. was in suspense, Schiller wrote, in December, 1792, in the following manner to a friend:—"Are you acquainted with "any one, who could translate well into French, "if I should have need to employ him? I can scarce "withstand the temptation to enter into the contro- "versy for the King, and write a memoire. The "undertaking appears to me of sufficient importance "to employ the pen of a rational man; and a Ger- "man author, if he were to express himself with "freedom and eloquence, might probably make an "impression upon these hot-headed politicians.— "The author who openly espouses the cause of the "King, may be allowed, on such an occasion, to say "some weighty truths better than another, and has "more credit. Perhaps you advise me to be silent, "but I believe, that at such a crisis it is not allowable "to remain indolent and inactive. If every man of "liberal mind had kept his thoughts to himself, no "steps would have been taken for our improvement. "There are times when one must speak openly, when "there is a susceptibility to receive impressions, and "I conceive the present is that time."—It does not

appear that this intention was ever put into execution.

In the year 1793, Schiller undertook a journey into Swabia; he staid from November till May of the following year, partly in Heilbronn, partly in Ludwigsburg, and had the pleasure of re-visiting his parents, his sisters, and the friends of his youth.—From Heilbronn he wrote to the Duke of Wirtemberg, whom he had offended by his flight from Stuttgard. He received no answer, but was told that the Duke had publicly declared Schiller might come to Stuttgard, and that he would connive at it. Upon this, Schiller determined to continue his journey, and found that he ran no risks. Soon afterwards the Duke died, and Schiller lamented him with the most sincere sentiments of gratitude and respect.

Schiller returned to Jena full of a plan which he had long meditated, but now ripe for execution, to unite all the best authors in Germany in writing for a periodical journal, which should excel all that had yet appeared of a similar nature. A spirited publisher was found, and the publication of "The Hours" (die Horen) was resolved upon. "The Thalia" had ceased with the year 1793. He did not finally choose Wallenstein for the subject of a tragedy till May, 1796, and it was not finished in less than three years. The critical circumspection, with which he watched the flights of his imagination, is very evident in the composition of this work; in which he has, perhaps, allowed the impression of art to be too

distinctly visible. But he was now engaged in a sort of rivalry with Goethe, not so much from a wish to imitate him, as from a desire not to be left behind him in the poetical imitation of nature. In this play of "Wallenstein" he seems to wish to prove, that he did not feel it necessary to lose sight of the theory of ideal beauty, to dramatize, in the character of the age to which it belongs, a story taken from German history, as Goethe had done in "Götz von Berlichingen."

Whilst he was busied with this play, Goethe and he, in the way of friendly emulation, amused themselves by writing a series of ballads, of which "The Diver," and the "A Walk to the Forge," may be mentioned as among the best which Schiller produced, and are master-pieces of their kind.

About 1791 he changed the place of his abode.—To have the opportunity of attending the theatre, Schiller wished to spend the winter only in Weimar, and, during the summer, to live in a rural retirement which he had purchased at Jena. But latterly Weimar was his constant residence. From the reigning Duke he received a very liberal support, and on all occasions, the most marked expressions of good will. In 1795, when he had been offered a professorship at Tübingen, the Duke promised to double his pension in case he should be prevented by illness from profiting by the productions of his pen. Afterwards, in 1799, he received an addition; and at last, in the year 1804, on account of some considerable offers from Berlin, his receipts were still further augmented. It was the

Duke of Saxe-Weimar who, in 1802, procured for Schiller a patent of nobility from the court of Vienna. —After the year 1799, he devoted himself entirely to dramatic composition.

When Schiller had once gained the mastery of his art, in the composition of "Wallenstein," his other dramatic works followed quickly upon each other, although his literary activity was often suspended by his bodily sufferings. "Wallenstein" appeared in 1799; "Mary Stuart," 1800; the "Maid of Orleans," 1801; "The Bride of Messina," 1803; and "William Tell," 1804. These labours allowed him sufficient intervals of time to prepare Shakspeare's "Macbeth," and Gozzi's "Turandot" for the German stage. Later, also, he translated Racine's "Phædra," and two French comedies.

It was not the hours of the day, which Schiller dedicated to his most important occupations; it is the still hours of the night, to which we are indebted for the principal productions of his genius. As soon as night came on, and all was still in the streets, Schiller set himself down to his writing table. Near him stood generally some strong coffee or wine chocolate, and often a bottle of old Rhenish or Champaigne.— He used these as means to exalt his imagination, and hinder his mind from feeling the effects of bodily depression. His neighbours often heard him vehemently declaiming, and those, who could see him when so engaged, which they were now and then able to do from the opposite houses of the narrow

street in which he lived at Jena, saw him at times pace up and down the room with violent gesticulation, and then throw himself into his chair. He would drink now and then of the cup standing beside him, lean his head upon his left hand, write, then declaim, stand up, sit down again, and read. In winter, he was sometimes found fixt in his seat till four or even five in the morning; in summer till three, then he retired to bed. He generally spent the forenoon at Jena in his garden, at Weimar in the circle of his family, and at the window. In the afternoon he read hastily over what he had written the foregoing night, and so prepared himself for the labours of the next. The remaining part of the day and evening was given up to his extensive correspondence, to the numerous foreigners who came to visit him; but principally to the circle of his amiable family.

Among those productions of Schiller's genius, which are known to be the fruits of his nightly labours, are Wallenstein, Mary Stuart, and the Maid of Orleans.

It was to the theatre, especially, that Schiller gave his attention. With this view he and Goethe were often together, and both of them were generally present at the reading of new pieces, which commonly took place at their own houses. Very often Schiller invited the actors to his house, and read to them one of his master-pieces, with all the energy of declamation, and entertained them with the most instructive discourses upon their art. He was a severe critic upon their performances, and the louder he was in

their praise during the representation, the more he found fault the next day.

The plays of Iffland obtained a large share of his approbation, those of Kotzebue less; but he paid distinguished honour to the merits of Lessing, whom he considered as the restorer of German literature. He was used to say, that Lessing had deserved well of his country, by putting an end to the affected practice of Frenchifying the German language, and making his countrymen better acquainted with the English, and particularly with the writings of Shakspeare.

Schiller had a strong dislike of the tumultuous pleasures of life. The play-house was among the few public places which he was in the habit of frequenting, and he gave his time and attention to it, not so much for the sake of amusement, as to observe the impression, which the poet and the skill of the performer made upon the audience. Here he sat in a neat tasteful box, built purposely for himself and Goethe, in the new theatre at Weimar, or else in a seat not far from the Duke's, always wrapt in thought. His mind was then occupied with what he wrote down as soon as he returned home.

These are some of the principal incidents and traits of character recorded by those who have written Schiller's life. It only remains to give an account of the illness, which, at the premature age of forty-five, carried to the grave this great man, who had long stood foremost in the ranks of German literature.

What Schiller had long feared, that the complaints

in his breast were so deeply rooted as to baffle the skill of his physicians, became now but too apparent. For a considerable time back he had suffered severely from spasms in the chest, and his bodily strength at last sank under their repeated attacks. On the 7th and 8th of May, 1805, a spitting of blood came on, which gave warning of his approaching dissolution. The cries of his beloved children seemed in this situation to distress him much. With a feeble voice he desired that the dear souls might be carried into another room. His wife stood weeping by his bedside, her hand locked in his. He said to her, in a solemn tone, "Change and separation is the lot upon "earth. Compose thyself." On the 9th of May, the day of his death, he became delirious, and fancied he saw visions. He was heard to exclaim, "Who fired "the cannons? Who commands the left wing?— "See! the chain-shot mows down whole ranks!— "How splendid the regiment looks, white and blue! "Are they in the camp? That is glorious!" These were the intelligible expressions which he was heard to utter. Towards four o'clock in the afternoon he became more composed. The by-standers began to encourage hopes, but his physicians undeceived them by saying that in such cases quietness is always a fatal symptom. Their prognostic was soon verified, before the deep bell of the castle clock struck six, with a serene countenance Schiller had breathed his last.

Upon dissection it was found that a diseased organization of great extent had taken place in his lungs.

Ths lobe on the right side was no longer able to perform its functions, while that on the left had increased in size. Schiller left behind a widow and four children.

Schiller did not die rich; his disposition was not one which loves to accumulate. In the conduct of his domestic affairs he was orderly and regular, though the condition of his health, and mode of living arising from sleeplessness and other deeply rooted maladies, rendered a greater expence necessary. That his various writings had, in the course of his life, been a source of considerable profit to him, there is little reason to doubt; and after his fame was established as an author, he was in the habit of receiving proposals from booksellers in all parts of Germany, who were eager to treat with him for the copy-right of his new works. But he never could be prevailed upon to adopt a practice, too common amongst the literary men of Germany, to receive money for allowing his name to be prefixed to works, which did not issue from his pen. No price could tempt him.

Schiller's exterior possessed nothing attractive at first sight. His make was tall and slender, large of bone, but very lean. His gait was stiff and slow, but firm and manly; his looks, as he walked, were always fixed upon the ground, like those of a man immersed in deep thought, so that he hardly perceived the salutations of his acquaintances as they passed him. His brown hair was somewhat thinly scattered over his highly arched head, distinguished here and there by

paler spots, which would soon have become grey.—Beneath his high brow and large eye-brows, and a little sunk in his head, sparkled his expressive eyes, which bespoke genius, and inspired confidence and friendship. His nose was Grecian, his lips rather strongly thrown out, and his mouth well-formed.—His chin projected, and was marked in the middle by a pit or dimple, the cheeks and temples hollow, and the colour of his countenance generally pale.—The most faithful and spirited likeness of Schiller is a colossal bust at Stuttgard, by Professor Dennecker.

In forming an estimate of Schiller's merits as a dramatic writer, when we compare one of his pieces with another, and balance the beauties with the defects, impartial criticism will find sufficient examples to shew that this great poet has often failed, but that with all his failings, he must be ranked among those writers, who are the pride of German literature.—Among the German tragic poets, there is none who can contest with him the palm of excellence. In his other poems, also, there may be discovered something of the same style of thought which predominates in his tragedies. Even his cheerfulness resembles a melancholy smile. A bold and free spirit, like his, always struggling with itself and with the course of events, never finding entire satisfaction, contemplating with philosophical seriousness the mystery of existence, and looking to a higher and better order of things, could not long employ itself upon evanescent ideas, which only dwell upon the surface. Hence his lyric

poems generally assume somewhat of a philosophical and didactic character. Such are "The Gods of Greece," "The Artists," and the elegy called "The Walk." In his poetic tales and romances, which are among the best in the German language, he has endeavoured to give his imagination another direction, to try what he could execute in this species of composition.

Schiller's historical writings, which are, perhaps, more read by foreigners than his poems, ought rather to be considered as the works of a poetical genius, endeavouring to put on a new character, to fulfil the duties of an historian. In the unfinished work, entitled "The Revolt of the Netherlands from Spain," the historical facts appear always under the form of a romantic ideality, notwithstanding the references by which the author has verified them. The history of the Thirty Years' War, intended originally for an historical pocket almanac, has all the merit of a well-told tale, which is equally amusing and instructive. It is a sort of companion in prose to Schiller's "Wallenstein," as his history of the revolution in the Netherlands is to his "Don Carlos." In these prose compositions we easily recognize the unbending of the mighty genius which dictated his dramatic poems.

"Schiller was in the full maturity of his intellectual "powers," says Schlegel, "when he was carried off "by a premature death. Up to the last period of his "life, his health, which had been long broken up, "was always made to yield to his powerful will, and

"exhausted in endeavours to advance his literary "fame and that of his country. How much he might "still have performed, as he devoted himself exclu- "sively to the theatre, and with every new production "exhibited a higher mastery of his art, we may be "allowed to conjecture from the specimens of excel- "lence he has left behind. He was a virtuous artist, "in the genuine sense of the word; he worshipped "the true and beautiful with purity of heart, and to his "indefatigable endeavours to reach them, he offered "up his life as a sacrifice, far from petty self-love, "and from the jealousy too common even among "artists of excellence."

MARY STUART,

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ELIZABETH, Queen of England.
MARY STUART, Queen of Scotland, a prisoner in England.
ROBERT DUDLEY, Earl of Leicester.
GEORGE TALBOT, Earl of Shrewsbury.
WM. CECIL, Baron Burleigh, High Treasurer.
EARL OF KENT.
WILLIAM DAVISON, Secretary of State.
SIR AMIAS PAULET, Mary's keeper, or jailor.
MORTIMER, his nephew.
COUNT AUBESPINE, French Ambassador.
COUNT BELLIEVRE, Envoy Extraordinary of France.
OKELLY, Mortimer's friend.
DRUGEON DRURY, under jailor of Mary.
MELVIL, her steward.
HANNAH KENNEDY, her nurse.
MARGARET CURL, her waiting woman.
Sheriff of the County.
Officer of the Body Guard.
French and English Gentlemen.
Guards, Court Servants of the Queen of England.
Male and Female Servants of the Queen of Scotland.

MARY STUART.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Chamber in the Castle at Fotheringay.

HANNAH KENNEDY, *nurse of the Queen of Scotland, in violent altercation with* PAULET, *who is upon the point of opening a chest.* DRUGEON DRURY, *his assistant, with picklocks.*

KENNEDY.

How now, Sir? What new boldness? Hold, I say,
Off from the chest!

PAULET.

Whence came these ornaments?
You've had them thrown you from the upper rooms,
I warrant, with these trinkets you had meant
To bribe the gardener. Curse these female arts!
Spite of my vigilance and searching eyes,
They've still more jewels, still more hidden stores.
[*Laying hold of the chest.*
Here lies some secret stuff.

KENNEDY.

Hold off your hands:
This chest contains my lady's private trinkets.

PAULET.

Just what I'm seeking. [*Drawing out writings.*

KENNEDY.

Mere unmeaning papers,
The exercise and pastime of her pen,
To while away a prison's weary hours.

PAULET.

'Tis in such pastime the bad spirit works.

KENNEDY.

These writings are in French.

PAULET.

So much the worse.
The language doth betoken England's foe.

KENNEDY.

Sketches of letters to the Queen of England.

PAULET.

These I take charge of. Ha! what glitters here?
[*He opens a secret spring, and pulls out jewels from a private division.*
A royal fillet, rich in precious stones,
Intwined with fleurs-de-lis: here, Drury, take them,
And lay them with the rest.

KENNEDY.

How can you dare
To put this shameful violence upon us?

PAULET.

While she possesses ought, she can do harm,

For every thing with her becomes a weapon.

KENNEDY.

O Sir, be kind, and spare our last remains
Of royal state; the sight of former greatness
Beguiles her poor heart of its load of grief.
If you take this, we are bereft of all.

PAULET.

'Tis in safe custody. In proper season
It shall most scrupulously be rendered back.

KENNEDY.

Who would believe, that looks at these bare walls,
A queen lives here? Where is the canopy
Over her seat? Is she not forced to set
Her delicate foot upon the cold rough ground,
And pewter vessels, which the poorest lady
Would scorn to use, furnish her homely meals.

PAULET.

So treated she at Stirling her poor Lord,
While she with her gallant feasted on gold.

KENNEDY.

You have denied us even a looking glass.

PAULET.

So long as she beholds her idle charms,
Ne'er will she cease from forming vain attempts.

KENNEDY.

No books are left us to divert the thoughts.

PAULET.

The bible's left her to amend the heart.

KENNEDY.

Even of her lute's sweet tones she is bereft.

PAULET.

Because she tuned it to loose airs.

KENNEDY.

How hard!
For her that was a queen even in her cradle,
And at the court of royal Medici
Tasted the fulness of each earthly joy.
Is't not enough to spoil her of the power,
But you must grudge the empty pageantry?
The noble heart bears up against the blow
Of great misfortunes, but it pines and frets,
When robbed of all life's lesser ornaments.

PAULET.

They only turn to vanity that heart
Which should bewail its sins with contrite tears.
Debasement and privation can alone
Wash out the stains of luxury and guilt.

KENNEDY.

If youthful blood has led her into errors,
Her heart must answer it to God; no judge
In England has the power to try her deeds.

PAULET.

That country sits in judgment on her deeds,
Whose laws she breaks.

KENNEDY.

How can she break the laws,
Chained as she is in strait and cruel bondage?

PAULET.

Yet from this cruel bondage she could stretch
An arm into the world, to light the torch

Of civil discord in this peaceful realm,
And 'gainst our queen, whom God preserve, to arm
The hands of ruffian murderers. From these walls
Did she not stir up Babington and Parry,
To whet their swords against her sacred life?
Spite of these iron bars she could entangle
The heart of noble Norfolk in her toils.
Under the fatal axe his honoured head,
The best and bravest of our island, fell
A bloody offering to her witching charms.
And did this sad example terrify
Those madmen, who, for her sake, threw themselves
Headlong into perdition's yawning gulph?
Each day the scaffold streams afresh with blood
Shed for her sake, nor will this end, till she,
The guiltiest, lays her own head on the block.
O cursed be the day, that England first
Received this Helen in her friendly arms!

KENNEDY.

England received her in her friendly arms!
O ill-starred lady, since that luckless day,
When first she set her foot upon this land,
And as a fugitive, helpless and forlorn
Sought the protection of her royal cousin,
Has she, against the rights of royal blood,
Against the rights of nations, seen herself
Bound in close durance, in a prison's walls
To languish out the best days of her youth.
And now that she has known the bitterness
Of long captivity, like a common felon

Is she dragged forth by the stern hand of law,
To answer for her life,—herself a queen!

PAULET.

She came into this land with murder's guilt
Upon her head, driven out by her own people,
Whom her vile deeds so justly had incensed.
She came with full intent to undermine
The happiness of England, to revive
The bloody days of Mary, to restore
The Romish faith, and to betray this land
To France, its sworn and everlasting foe.
Why else did she refuse to ratify
The solemn treaty framed at Edinburgh,
To give up all pretensions to the crown
Of England, and with one stroke of her pen
To ope her prison doors? She rather chose
To bear imprisonment with all its ills,
Than give up the parade of a vain title.
Why did she this? because she placed her trust
In the black arts of treachery and fraud.
And hoped to gain the mastery of this land,
By weaving plots within these darksome walls.

KENNEDY.

You mock us, Sir, and edge your cruelty
With bitterest taunts. How could she form such dreams,
Who lives intombed within these lonely walls?
To whom no sound of comfort, or the voice
Of friendship comes from her loved home to soothe
Her dismal solitude: for many a year

She ne'er has seen the face of man, save that
Of her stern-visaged jailors; and but now,
In your rough kinsman, a new watchman comes
To heap fresh bolts and iron grates around her.

PAULET.

No iron grates can save us from her cunning.
How know I that these bars may not be filed,
This chamber's floor, these walls that look so strong
And firm without, may not be undermined
To let in treason, when my eyes are closed?
O what a cursed office have I here,
To watch this cunning mischief-breeding woman!
Oft start I from my sleep and walk my rounds
At night, like a tormented ghost, to try
Each bolt and bar, and prove the watchman's truth;
And tremble when the morning comes, lest all
My fears should prove too true. But now I hope
This soon will have an end. I'd rather sit
A porter at hell-gate, to keep the damned
In bondage, than this wily treacherous queen.

KENNEDY.

See where she comes!

PAULET.

Christ's image in her hand,
But pride and worldly pleasure in her heart.

Enter MARY *in a veil, a crucifix in her hand.*

KENNEDY *(hastening to meet her).*

O gracious queen! they tread us under foot
With barefaced and outrageous tyranny.

Each coming day heaps fresh indignities
Upon thy crowned head.

MARY.

Compose thyself.
Say what has happened.

KENNEDY.

Hither bend thine eyes!
Thy desk is broken open, all thy papers,
And thy heart's dearest treasure, which we saved
With so much care, thy much loved bridal jewels
We brought from France, all, all are in his hands.
Nought now is left thee of thy royal state;
Thou art indeed bereft.

MARY.

Be calm, my Hannah.
'Tis not these outward gems that make the queen.
They may entreat us basely, but debase
They cannot. I've in England learnt to bear,
And this shall not o'ercome me. Sir, by force
You have possessed yourself of what I meant
This day to put into your hands. These papers
Contain a letter to my royal sister
Of England. Give me, Sir, your pledge of honour,
That you will faithfully convey the same
To her own hand, and not to the false Burleigh's.

PAULET.

I shall consider, Madam.

MARY.

Its contents
I will make known to you. Therein I beg

A private conference with her royal self,
Whom these eyes ne'er beheld. I'm called to plead
Before a court of men, whom I can ne'er
Acknowledge as my equals, and my heart
Fails me at thoughts of such a presence; she,
Elizabeth, is of my sex and rank.
To her alone, the woman, sister, queen,
Can I unlock my heart.

PAULET.

Madam, how oft
Have you entrusted fortune, honour, fame,
To men far less deserving your esteem.

MARY.

I also do intreat a second grace,
Which none but hearts of stone could sure refuse.
Within these walls I've long endured the want
Of spiritual comfort and the holy table.
And she, who robs me of my crown and freedom,
Who threats my life itself, could never wish
To shut the gates of mercy on my soul.

PAULET.

According to your wish the worthy dean—

MARY *(interrupting him quick).*

Talk not to me of deans, Sir! I demand
A priest of my own church, and furthermore
Require the presence of a notary,
To fashion my last will and testament.
Grief and a prison's wretchedness have gnawed
The heart strings of my life. I fear my days
Are numbered, and I feel like one a dying.

PAULET.

There spake you well, such thoughts as these become you.

MARY.

Who knows too, but some quick hand may cut short
The tedious work of grief, therefore I wish
To set in order all that still is mine.

PAULET.

This you have leave to settle. England's queen
Will not enrich herself by such poor leavings.

MARY.

My faithful waiting-women and my servants
Have been sent from me. What has been their fate?
Where are they? Their affectionate services
I can dispense with, but I fain would know
These honest creatures suffer not from want.

PAULET.

Your servants are provided for. [*Offers to go.*

MARY.

You go, Sir?
Will you not deign to ease my anxious heart,
Pressed with the torments of uncertainty?
I've been, thanks to your prying vigilance,
Secluded here from all the world; no news
Pierces these walls to reach my ears. My fate
Lies in my enemies' hand. A painful month,
A long and painful month is now past by,
Since in this castle forty commissaries
Came sudden on me, and began to ope
Their business; then with most indecent haste

They call me, unprepared, without the help
Of advocate, to stand before a court
Till then unheard of, and require forthwith
That I astounded and surprised, should plead
Upon the spot, from memory's aid alone,
To certain weighty criminations,
Most artfully arranged. Like ghosts they came,
And vanished from the place. From that day forth
No tongue has broken silence, and I seek
In vain to read your looks, from them to learn,
Whether my innocence and the zeal of friends
Have triumphed o'er the malice of my foes,
Or I must fall their victim. Break at length
This awful silence.

PAULET *(after a pause)*.

Make your peace with heaven.

MARY.

I hope for heaven's mercy, Sir, and hope
For righteous judgment from my earthly judges.

PAULET.

You shall have righteous judgment, doubt it not.

MARY.

Is then my process ended, Sir?

PAULET.

I know not.

MARY.

Am I condemned?

PAULET.

Madam, I cannot say.

MARY.

Dispatch seems here the fashion. Tell me, Sir,
Will murder here surprise me, like my judges?

PAULET.

Think it may be so, and the hour will find you
In better frame of mind than now you bear.

MARY.

No sentence, which a court of Westminster,
Led on by Burleigh's hate and Hatton's zeal,
Should dare to utter, can astonish me;
But I am yet to learn what England's queen
Will dare in execution of the sentence.

PAULET.

The sovereigns of this realm have nought to fear,
Save their own conscience and the parliament.
The award of justice, fearless, and in sight
Of all the world, their power will execute.

Enter MORTIMER, *Paulet's nephew. He comes in without taking any notice of the Queen.*

MORTIMER.

Uncle you're asked for.

[*He retires in the same manner. The Queen observes it with displeasure, and turns to* PAULET, *who is going to follow him.*

MARY.

Sir, one more request.
When you have aught to say with me—from you
I can bear much, I reverence your grey hairs—

This young man's insolence I cannot brook,
Spare me the sight of his unmannered rudeness.

PAULET.

That, which disgusts you with him, in my eyes
Gives him more value, he's not one of those
Soft-hearted fools, who melt at woman's tears.
He has been to Rheims and Paris, and brings back
His true old English heart. Your wily arts,
Madam, are lost on him, that be assured. [*Exit.*

KENNEDY.

And dares the rude one say so to your face?
O it is hard!

MARY *(lost in thought).*

In days of former splendour,
When the world smiled upon us, we have lent
Too oft an ear to flattery; it is just,
My Hannah, that we now should hear the voice
Of harsh rebuke.

KENNEDY.

So downcast and submiss,
My dearest lady! You, who erst were wont
To keep so brave a heart, and comfort mine!
And rather had I need to chide your lightness
Of spirits than their heaviness.

MARY.

I know him.
It is the murdered Darnley's royal shade,
In wrath he rises from the charnel house,
Nor will he let me rest, till I have drunk
The cup of misery to the very dregs.

KENNEDY.

What thoughts are these!

MARY.

You may forget it, Hannah,
But from my memory it can ne'er be razed.
And now has the revolving year brought back
The day, on which this luckless deed was done;
A day, which I must keep with tears and fasting.

KENNEDY.

Oh! let this spirit rest at last in peace.
This deed you have atoned for with long years
Of bodily penance, and compunctious tears.
Heaven has forgiven you and the holy church,
Which keeps the keys of pardon for our sins.

MARY.

The long forgiven crime fresh-bleeding rises
From the light covering of its darksome grave.
No bell at holy mass, no sacred censer
In the priest's hand, can send back to its vault,
The vengeful spirit of my murdered lord.

KENNEDY.

You did not slay him; others did the deed.

MARY.

I was consenting, and with honied words
Clothed in the garb of friendship, drew him on
Into the pit-fall.

KENNEDY.

Youth pleads on your side,
Your years were then so tender.

MARY.

Aye, so tender,
And drew this guilt upon my youthful head.

KENNEDY.

But you had bloody cause of provocation
From this man's insolence, whom your love had drawn
Forth from his lowly station, and had raised,
To sit upon the bridal throne, and blessed
With the possession of your blooming charms.
Could he forget, that this his splendid lot
Was all the work of condescending love?
He did forget it, worthless as he was,
With base suspicion he returned your love,
Your tenderness with cold unmannered roughness.
To cross your wishes was his constant aim.
Then burst the spell, which had o'ercast your sight;
Angry, you drove the wretch from your embrace,
And gave him to deserved contempt,—and he—
Did he attempt your favour to regain,
And seek forgiveness? did he throw himself
Repentant at your feet?—no, in despite,
He bade you stern defiance; he, your creature,
Would play the tyrant; even before your eyes
A band of bloody ruffians led by him
Stabbed your own favourite, sweet-voiced Rizzio.
With blood you justly paid the bloody deed.

MARY.

And on my head the bloody recompense
Will fall. Thou speakest my sentence in thy comfort.

KENNEDY.

When you consented to the deed, you were not
Yourself; the madness of a passionate love
Had seized your senses, and enslaved your mind
To that tremendous arch-seducer Bothwell;
Who, with his hellish arts and magic drinks
And traitorous violence, led your dazzled heart
A wretched captive to his shameful will.

MARY.

The arts, by which he won me, were none else
Than my own weakness and his manly form.

KENNEDY.

No, no, I say. He must have called to aid
The spirits of darkness, who could weave such films
About your firm and vigorous intellect.
No more you listened to my friendly voice,
And lost all sense of what was fair and seemly.
The timid fear of men left you; those cheeks
Where blushing modesty once sat enshrined,
Now glowed with fierce and interdicted fires.
The veil of mystery you threw aside,
And with a boldness, such as men display
In vicious courses, you exposed yourself
With open front to infamy and scorn.
You gave to him, the murderer of your lord,
While on his head the people poured their curses,
To bear the royal sword before your face,
Triumphant through the streets of Edinburgh;
You girt with armed men the parliament,
And in the temple of justice you constrained,

With mock solemnities of law, the judges
To free the murderer of his bloody deed.
Yet one step further. Heavens!

MARY.

Nay, speak the rest—
And at the altar gave to him my hand.

KENNEDY.

Oh! let eternal silence veil the deed.
The heart revolts at it, it seems the act
Of one quite lost—but you are not that lost one—
I know you well; for I am she, who nursed
Your tender infancy; your heart is formed
For softness, and alive to shame. Your vice
Is nought but thoughtlessness. Yes, I repeat it,
There are some evil spirits which wind their way
Into the unsuspecting heart of man,
And in a moment drag it on to crime.
Then flying back to Hell, they leave behind
The pangs of horror in the abused breast.
Since the commission of this deed, which throws
A shade upon your name, no vice has stained
Your life, I'm witness of the happy change.
Take courage then, and be at peace within.
What you have done amiss, you may not answer
In England; not the proud Elizabeth
Nor England's parliament can try your deeds.
'Tis barefaced power alone, which bears you down.
Before this self-made court you may appear,
Strong in the might of conscious innocence.

MARY.

Who comes?

[MORTIMER *shews himself at the door.*

KENNEDY.

It is the nephew. Go within.

Enter MORTIMER *(timidly coming in).*

MORTIMER *(to the nurse).*

Leave us, and keep a watch before the door;
I wish a private conference with the queen.

MARY *(with dignity).*

Hannah, you stay with me.

MORTIMER.

Fear not, my queen,
And learn to know me better. [*reaches to her a paper.*

MARY.

Ha! what's this?

MORTIMER.

Leave us, good nurse, and look you that my uncle
Does not surprise us.

MARY *(to the nurse who still delays, and looks at the Queen with asking eyes).*

Go, do as he bids you.

[*The nurse goes out with expressions of wonder.*

This from my uncle! Cardinal of France! [*reads.*
"You may most safely trust in Mortimer,
"Who brings you this, he is your surest friend."

[*Looking at* MORTIMER *with astonishment.*

Can I believe it? is there no illusion

To cheat my senses? do I find a friend
So near me, when I thought myself deserted
By all the world? and can this friend be you,
The nephew of my jailor, whom I thought
My bitterest enemy?

MORTIMER *(throwing himself at her feet).*

I intreat your pardon
Most gracious queen, for this detested mask,
Which it has cost me pain enough to wear.
Yet I may thank it, that it now permits me
Thus to approach you and attempt your rescue.

MARY.

Rise, Sir, surprise o'ercomes my sense—I cannot
So quickly from the depth of my distress
Allow myself to hope. Say, Sir, how this
Can be within the compass of belief.

MORTIMER *(rises).*

The time is brief. Soon comes my uncle hither,
And with him comes a man of hated name.
But ere their horrid mission reach your ear,
Learn from my lips what help the Almighty sends.

MARY.

He sends you by the wonder of his might.

MORTIMER.

First from myself let me begin.

MARY.

Proceed.

MORTIMER.

O queen, I scarce had numbered twenty years,
Trained in the paths of strictest discipline,

And from the breast nursed up in deadliest hate
Against the popedom, and the church of Rome,
When suddenly the unconquerable wish
Seized me to visit foreign parts. I left
The hoarse-voiced puritan conventicle,
I left my home behind me; with quick step
I traversed France, and bent my eager course
Towards the plains of far-famed Italy.
'Twas then the time of holy festival,
And crowds of pilgrims covered all the ways,
Garlands bedecked each image, and it seemed
As if the human race were journeying on
Towards their heavenly home. The moving stream
Of the believers floated me along,
And bore me onward to the capitol.
How shall I paint the emotions of my soul,
When on my ravished sight the pillared pomp
Of domes and temples burst, the Colosseum
In all its glories, then the painter's hand
Enchained my fancy with its breathing forms.
Till now I ne'er had felt the artist's power;
The church, which nursed my infant faith, abhors
The visible image and the charms of sense,
Revering only the unembodied spirit.
How was it with me, as I stept within
The threshold of the churches, as I heard
Music, as if from heaven itself descending,
And saw, from forth each wall and gorgeous roof,
A host of glorious forms, arrayed in light,
Standing confest before my aching sense?

The holy saints of God themselves I saw,
The angel's salutation, and the birth
Of the Redeemer, with his virgin mother,
The triune God descending from on high,
The holy Jesus on the mount transformed,
And next the pope, in robes of state arrayed,
Blessing his children at the sacred altar.
Oh! what is gold, and what the jewel's sheen,
With which the kings of earth bedeck their brows?
In him sits visible holiness enshrined;
His mansion is indeed an earthly heaven:
Such forms belong not to this world.

MARY.

Forbear
To wound me thus! nor spread before mine eyes
My early life in all its freshest hues:
For I am wretched and a prisoner.

MORTIMER.

So was I, gracious queen, and yet my spirit
Burst from its bonds, and vigorous winged its way
To hail the glorious day of life and freedom.
Henceforth I swore a deadly hate to books;
I decked my temples with the garland's wreath,
In frolic gaiety amongst the gayest.
The Scottish nobles thronged to my resort,
And joyous parties of light-hearted Frenchmen.
Then to your noble uncle they present me,
The Cardinal of Guise,—O such a man!
So great, so manly, and withal so gifted
To rule mankind and turn them at his will:

The perfect pattern of a royal priest!
A spiritual prince, such as these eyes ne'er saw!

MARY.

You then have seen the dear and noble face
Of this exalted, this beloved man,
Under whose fostering care my youth was trained.
Oh! tell me of him. In his memory
Do I still live, and does kind fortune tend him?
Does life still bloom with him, does he yet stand
A glorious rock and bulwark of the church?

MORTIMER.

With kindest condescension this great man
Vouchsafed to ope the mysteries of faith,
And purge my heart from error's darksome maze.
He showed me how the glimmering light of reason
Serves but to plunge us into deeper gulphs
Of error; that the eye of man must see,
What man's heart must believe; that the church needs
A visible head; and that the spirit of truth
Has always rested on the holy councils.
How did the vain conceits of my young brain
Vanish before the warm and powerful voice
Of his resistless eloquence; I returned
Into the bosom of the holy church,
And at his feet forswore my heresies.

MARY.

Then of the happy thousands you are one,
Whom his persuasion, with celestial power,
As erst the holy preacher of the mount,
Has turned from error to the living God.

MORTIMER.

Soon after, as the duties of his state
Called him to France, he sent me straight to Rheims,
Where, by the Jesuits' pious labour, priests
Are trained to preach our holy faith in England.
There found I Morgan, that most noble Scot,
Your faithful Lesley, and the learned Bishop
Of Rosse, who linger out the weary days
Of exile, far from their beloved home.
With these exalted men I knit myself
In closest bonds, and strengthened by their converse
My faith. One day, as in the bishop's dwelling
I looked around, there chanced to meet mine eye
A female portrait, of most touching sweetness.
In speechless extacy I stood before it
Intranced, and scarcely master of myself.
Then thus the bishop; well you stand excused
To gaze so fondly on that beauteous form;
The loveliest of her sex, whom you behold,
Is also peerless in calamity.
She weeps in bondage for our holy faith,
And 'tis your native land in which she suffers.

MARY.

O upright man! No all is not yet lost,
When such a friend is left me in my woes.

MORTIMER.

Then he began, with passionate eloquence,
To paint the horrors of your martyrdom,
And the bloodthirsty rancour of your foes.
Your lofty ancestry he next displayed,

And high descent from Tudor's royal house,
Shewing by proof, that you alone have right
To reign in England, not this upstart queen,
The offspring of adultery, whom Henry
Himself rejected as a bastard daughter.
Not trusting to this evidence alone,
I sought advice from the most learned lawyers,
And opened many an old armorial book.
All, whom I thus consulted, with one voice
Confirmed your claims to sit on England's throne.
Now know I well, that these your lawful rights
Have been your greatest wrongs, and that this realm
To you belongs as rightful sovereign queen,
In which you languish as a prisoner.

MARY.

Oh! this unhappy right, it is the source
Of all my woes.

MORTIMER.

Just then the tidings came,
That you had been removed from Talbot's care,
And to my uncle's custody committed.
In this event I saw the hand of heaven
Visibly raised to work out your deliverance.
And in mine ear it sounded like the voice
Of fate, to tell me that my arm was chosen
The happy instrument to save your life.
My friends with joyful sympathy applaud
The bold design, the cardinal himself
Gave me his blessing, and instructed me
To wear the close dissembler's needful mask.

Soon was the plan matured, and I return
Back to my native land, where, as you know,
But ten days since I landed *(he stops)*. O my queen!
I saw you, not your image, but yourself!
Oh! what a treasure do these castle walls
Inclose; no prison, rather the abode
Of Gods, more splendid than the royal court
Of England! O thrice happy he! whom heaven
Permits with you to breathe the self same air.
Truly she judges right, who hides you here.
Our noble English youth would rise in arms,
No sword would idly in its scabbard rest,
And bold rebellion with gigantic strides
Would through this island stalk, if every Briton
Should see his queen!

MARY.

'Twere well indeed for her,
If every Briton saw her with your eyes!

MORTIMER.

Were he like me a witness of your griefs,
A witness of the soft and noble calmness,
With which you suffer these unworthy wrongs.
And does not each new trial more display
Your royal nature, have a prison's hardships
Diminished aught from your bewitching charms?
You are bereft of all life's ornaments,
And yet unceasing light and life play round you.
Ne'er do my footsteps o'er this threshold tread,
But my poor heart at once is torn with pangs,
And ravished with delight to gaze on you.

But the decisive moment comes, each hour
Is pregnant with events of perilous import.
I dare no longer stay. I dare no longer
Conceal the dreadful tidings.

MARY.

Is my doom
Pronounced? Declare it freely, I can bear it.

MORTIMER.

It is pronounced. The two and forty judges
At length have found you guilty; the two Houses
Of Lords and Commons, the metropolis,
With violent instance, urge the sentence on
To execution, but the queen delays
—From wicked cunning, hoping to be forced,
And not from tender feelings of compassion.

MARY *(with composure)*.

No, Mortimer, your news does not surprise
Nor overwhelm me. Such intelligence
I long have looked for. Well I know my judges.
After the treatment they have put on me,
I well can understand they ne'er will dare
To give me liberty. I know their aims.
They mean to keep me in eternal durance,
And my revenge and rightful claims to bury
Together in the still oblivious prison.

MORTIMER.

O no, my gracious queen, they stop not there.
The tyrant's will does not content itself
To do its work by halves. While yet you live,
Distrust and dread live with the English queen.

No prison's walls entomb you deep enough,
Your death alone can make her throne secure.

MARY.

And dares she then, regardless of the shame,
To lay my crowned head upon the block?

MORTIMER.

Yes, she will dare it, doubt not that she will.

MARY.

Dares she debase her own high majesty
And every crowned king by such an outrage?
And fears she nought from France's great revenge?

MORTIMER.

With France she binds herself in closest league,
And gives to Anjou's Duke her crown and hand.

MARY.

Will she not rouse the might of Spain to arms?

MORTIMER.

Not all the world in arms can make her quail,
Whilst with her people she remains at peace.

MARY.

And would she such a spectacle display
Before the eyes of Britons?

MORTIMER.

Of late years,
This land has seen too many crowned females
Step from the throne to drench with blood the scaffold.
This path the mother of Elizabeth
Herself has trod, and Lady Catherine Howard;
Gray too (ill-fated lady) wore a crown.

MARY.

No, Mortimer, this is a groundless fear.
'Tis but the workings of your faithful heart,
Which conjures up these grisely shapes of horror.
But there are other means, secret and still,
By which the sovereign ruler of this land
Can rid herself of me and my pretensions.
Rather than find an executioner,
The murderer's hand is had on easier terms:
Here lies the source of dread. Whene'er my lips
Approach the cup to quench their needful thirst,
A shuddering seizes me, for fear the draught
May come commended by my sister's love.

MORTIMER.

Nor open means nor secret shall avail
To point the murderer's hand against your life.
Dispel your fears. The rescue is prepared.
Twelve noble English youths are bound with me
In solemn league, and at the sacrament
This morning early have they sealed their vows,
With a strong arm, to draw you from this prison.
Count Aubespine, the French Ambassador,
Is privy to our plot, and gives his aid;
'Tis at his palace where the associates meet.

MARY.

You make me tremble, Sir, but not for joy.
My heart is full of dark and dismal bodings.
Have you weighed well this enterprize, and do not
The bloody heads of Babington and Tichburn,
On London's bridge impaled, with warning voice

Affright you from your purpose? Think, besides,
What countless multitudes have met their fate
For this same daring, and their prodigal zeal
Has but increased the rigours of my prison.
Unhappy youth, fly from this fateful place,
Oh! fly, while yet you may, before Lord Burleigh
Has got upon the scent to dog your steps;
Ere the betrayer, with insidious aim,
Has wormed himself into your secret haunts.
Oh! fly the kingdom quick: ne'er did success
Attend the efforts of my kind defenders.

MORTIMER.

Not Babington's and Tichburn's bloody heads,
On London's bridge impaled, with warning voice,
Affright me from my purpose, nor besides
The countless multitudes, who met their fate
For this heroic daring; they have earned
Eternal glory, and I deem him blest,
Thrice blest, who for your dear sake mounts the scaffold.

MARY.

'Tis vain. Nor force nor cunning can avail.
The foe is watchful, and his power resistless.
Not only Paulet and his band of guards,
All England watches at my prison doors.
The free will of Elizabeth alone
Can ope them.

MORTIMER.

Cherish not that groundless hope.

MARY.

There is one man in England can unbar them.

MORTIMER.

Oh! let me hear his name.

MARY.

The Earl of Leicester.

MORTIMER *(steps back astonished).*

The Earl of Leicester! he! your bitterest foe!
The favourite of Elizabeth—from him—

MARY.

Do I expect deliverance, from none else.
Go to him, and unburthen your whole heart.
And as a pledge, that I have sent you, give him
This writing. It contains my portrait.

[*She takes a paper from her bosom,* MORTIMER *steps back, and seems doubting to receive it.*

Take it.
I've worn it long about me, but your kinsman,
With ceaseless vigilance, has stopt each access
That led to him. My guardian angel sure
Has sent you hither.

MORTIMER.

Gracious queen—this riddle—
Explain it to me.

MARY.

Leicester will explain it.
You safely may confide in him. Who comes?

KENNEDY *(hastily entering).*

Here comes Sir Amias, with a lord from court.

MORTIMER.

It is Lord Burleigh. Queen, collect yourself
To hear with firm composure what he brings.

[*He goes through a side door,* KENNEDY *follows him.*

Enter LORD BURLEIGH, *grand treasurer of England, and* PAULET.

PAULET.

To day you sought with certainty to learn
Your fate, that certainty you now receive
From my Lord Burleigh; bear it with submission.

MARY.

I hope to bear it, Sir, with that composure,
Which suits my innocence.

BURLEIGH.

I come commissioned
To bring the sentence of the court of justice.

MARY.

Lord Burleigh now most gladly lends his tongue
To speak the sentence of that court of justice,
Which guided its proceedings by his will.

PAULET.

You speak as if you knew the award already.

MARY.

Since my Lord Burleigh brings it, I must know it.
—But to the matter, Sir.

BURLEIGH.

Madam, you have
Yourself submitted to the two and forty—

MARY.

Pardon, my Lord, that in the very outset
I interrupt your speech—myself submitted
To the decision, say you, of these judges?

That did I never, that I never could.
Ne'er could I so far vilify my rank,
My people's dignity, my royal son,
And every sceptred prince that wears a crown.
It is a maxim of the English law,
That every man, who stands arraigned of crime,
Should plead before a jury of his peers.
Where are my equals in this committee?
My peers are kings alone.

BURLEIGH.

The articles
Of accusation were produced before you,
And to the court you thereupon made answer.

MARY.

Yes, I confess, that Hatton's treacherous arts
So far prevailed with me; but it was only
To vindicate my injured fame, and trusting,
That the victorious proofs of innocence
Would triumph over falsehood, that I gave
A patient hearing to these articles.
And this I did to shew my reverence
For the respected persons of the lords,
Not for their office, which I ne'er acknowledged.

BURLEIGH.

Whether or no you recognize their power
Is but an empty form, which cannot stop
The wholesome course of justice. While you breathe
The air of England, you enjoy the blessing
Of its protecting laws, and therefore must
Be subject to its sovereign.

MARY.

Yes, I breathe
The air of England in an English prison.
Is this to live in England, and enjoy
The blessing of its laws? I scarcely know them.
I ne'er consented to obey the laws.
This kingdom counts me not among its subjects,
Me, who am sovereign of a foreign state.

BURLEIGH.

And think you, that the royal name can lend
Its sanction, with impunity, to sow
The seeds of discord in a foreign land?
Where then would be the safety of a state,
If the avenging sword of equal law
Could not descend upon the royal head
Of the perfidious treason-breeding guest,
As on the head of the most abject slave?

MARY.

I wish not, Sir, to shrink from fair inquiry;
I but disclaim the persons of my judges.

BURLEIGH.

The judges, Madam! were they then base slaves,
Chosen from the dregs and refuse of the people,
Impudent brawlers, who set up to sale
Their truth and honesty, and make themselves
The venal instruments of stern oppression?
Were they not all the first men of this land,
Powerful enough to dare to speak the truth,
Equally raised above the base-born fear
Of princes, and the sordid love of gold?

Is it not they, who rule this noble realm
With equity and wisdom, they, whose names
Need but be mentioned, to repel each doubt,
And make suspicion dumb? First, at their head
Stands the most holy shepherd of his people,
The pious primate; next sagacious Talbot,
The keeper of the royal seal; and Howard
Who leads to victory the fleets of England.
Say, could the sovereign monarch of this land
Do more, than from her wide extended realm
Choose out the best and noblest, and appoint them
To judge the cause between two crowned heads.
And were it possible, that party hate
Should influence one breast, could forty lords,
Selected as they were, unite their voices
As prejudice or passion gave command?

MARY *(after a pause)*.

With dread I listen to that powerful voice,
Which ever hath been raised for my undoing.
And how shall I, a weak unlearned woman,
Dare to encounter such a practised speaker.
Well then; supposing, that these Lords were such
As you have painted them, I must be dumb,
My cause were lost, indeed, beyond all hope,
Should they pronounce me guilty. Yet these names,
Which win from you such loftiness of praise,
Which by their weight should crush me to the dust,
These names, my Lord, the history of this land
Tells me, have acted oft far other parts.
I see this old nobility of England,

The high majestic senate of the realm,
Like slaves in a seraglio, watch the frowns
And sultan-fancies of my uncle Henry.
I see this far-renowned upper house,
Corrupt and venal as the house of commons,
Make laws, and then unmake them, bind or loose
The bonds of wedlock, as the mighty lord
Commands; to day, the princesses of England
Disherit of their rights, and stigmatize
Their names with bastardy, the next, restore
Their honours, and the crown place on their brows.
I see these honourable peers, with quick
And courtier-like conviction, in four reigns
Alter four times the fashion of their faith.

BURLEIGH.

You call yourself a stranger to our laws,
You seem well versed in our calamities.

MARY.

And yet these are my judges! My Lord Treasurer,
I will deal plainly with you, and I hope
You will be just to me. They say, you are
True to the queen and faithful to the state,
Laborious, watchful, incorruptible.
I will believe it. Not your private gain
Governs your actions, 'tis your only aim
To serve your queen and country. But, my Lord,
Even for this you should distrust yourself,
Lest in your eyes the advantage of the state
Should seem to wear the sacred form of justice.
I will not doubt that many noble minds

Are joined with you to sit in judgment on me.
But they are protestants, and eager zealots
For England's weal, and sentence by their votes
A queen of Scotland, and a friend of Rome.
It is an ancient saying that no Southron
Can do a Scotsman justice, and for this
A custom has sprung up in the olden times
Of our forefathers, that no Englishman
Shall 'gainst a Scotsman in a court of justice
Bear witness, nor a Scot against a Southron.
Necessity begat this wonderous law,
A sense mysterious in old custom lies,
Which merits our respect. Nature, my Lord,
Threw these two hot and fiery tribes together
Upon this plank into the ocean's bosom,
Dividing it unequally, and bade them
Fight for possession and for mastery.
The shallow waters of the Tweed alone
Divide these mighty spirits, and its stream
Has oft run purple to the sea with blood
Drawn in their hot contentions. On its banks,
With sword in hand, their steel-clad warriors' forms
Frown on each other for these thousand years.
No foe can threaten England, but the Scot
Offers his ready aid to weigh her down,
No civil strife embroils our Scottish towns,
But England lends her hand to fan the flame.
Nor will this deadly feud abate, till all
The island in fraternal union joined,
Shall own one sceptre and one parliament.

BURLEIGH.

And shall a Stuart to this kingdom give
So great a blessing?

MARY.

Why should I deny it?
Yes, I avow, that I had formed the hope,
Two great and noble nations to unite
Beneath the olive shade of peace and freedom.
I little thought to satiate with my blood
Your people's hatred. No, I fondly dreamed,
That I should one day this enduring strife,
This rooted jealousy abate, and turn
To endless days of harmony and love:
And as my grandsire Richmond did unite
The hostile roses, so to join in one
The British crowns on the same royal brow.

BURLEIGH.

You chose a luckless path to gain your end,
When you attempted to stir up the flames
Of civil war, and mount the throne in blood.

MARY.

'Tis false—most false—so help me heaven's mercy!
I never wished it—where? Produce your proofs.

BURLEIGH.

I came not here to wrangle—this debate
Is not determined by the strife of tongues.
It is decided, by the votes of forty
Against the other two, that you have broken
The law, which last year passed the parliament,
By which it was provided, "If a tumult

" Shall happen in the kingdom, in the name
" And on behalf of any one, who makes
" Pretensions to the crown, straightway a process
" Against such person shall be held, until
" Justice shall overtake the guilty head."
And now it has been proven—

MARY.

My Lord Burleigh—
I doubt not, that a law expressly made
Against me, and contrived for my destruction,
Will against me be put in force. Alas!
For the poor victim, when the self-same mouth,
Which gave the law, gives utterance to the sentence.
Can you deny, my Lord, that this same act
Expressly was contrived to take my life.

BURLEIGH.

It should have served you for a solemn warning;
You have yourself to blame that you are caught:
You saw the abyss, which yawned before your steps,
And being forewarned threw yourself headlong down.
You joined yourself in league with Babington
And his blood-thirsty crew, you knew it all,
And from your prison held the reins of treason.

MARY.

When did I this? shew me the documents.

BURLEIGH.

They have been lately shewn in open court.

MARY.

Copies of papers by a stranger's hand!
Shew me the proofs that I did dictate them

At all, and so exactly dictate them,
As they have been produced before the court.

BURLEIGH.

In his last moments Babington confessed,
They were the same which he himself received.

MARY.

Why was he not, before his execution,
Confronted with me? Why was so much haste
Employed to send him to his great account,
Before they let me see him, face to face?

BURLEIGH.

Also your secretaries, Curl and Nau,
Have sworn on oath, these are the very letters,
Which, with your own mouth, you had dictated.

MARY.

Am I condemned upon the evidence
Of my own servants, on the truth and faith
Of those, who have betrayed their queen, and broke
Their truth and faith, when they deposed against me.

BURLEIGH.

In former times, you have declared this Curl
To be an upright, conscientious man.

MARY.

So I esteemed him—but the hour of danger
Alone can be the test of a man's heart.
The rack might force him to confess, and say
He knew not what. He thought to save himself
By such false witness, nor much injure me.

BURLEIGH.

His oath was free and unconstrained.

MARY.

But not
Before my face he swore it. Now, my Lord,
Here are two witnesses, both still alive.
Let them be brought before me, in my presence
Let them repeat their witness; why to me
Refuse a favour, which you grant a murderer?
From Talbot's self I learned, my former keeper,
That, in this very reign, a wholesome law
Was published, which decrees, that the accuser
Shall stand before the accused face to face.
Have I heard true or false? Tell me, Sir Amias,
For I have ever found you just and true;
Declare the fact: tell me upon your conscience,
Does such a law exist or no in England?

PAULET.

Madam, it does; so doth the law decree.
I must declare the truth.

MARY.

Well, now, my Lord,
If by the law you judge me rigorously,
When it oppresses me, is it not just
To grant me every privilege of law,
When it can do me service. Say, my Lord,
Why was not Babington confronted with me,
According to the law; why were not also
My secretaries, who are both yet living?

BURLEIGH.

Madam, compose yourself; 'tis not alone
Your secret correspondence with that traitor—

MARY.

I say, 'tis that alone, which brings on me
The vengeance of the law, of that alone
I have to clear myself. You must, my Lord,
Hold to your point, nor wander thus at large.

BURLEIGH.

It has been proved, that with the Spanish Envoy,
Mendoza, you have had some traitorous dealings.

MARY *(quickly)*.

Hold to the point, my Lord!

BURLEIGH.

That you had ta'en
Your measures, the religion of this land
To overturn, and all the kings of Europe
To raise in arms 'gainst England.

MARY.

Well, suppose,
I had done so—which I deny—however,
Suppose I did. My Lord, they keep me here
A prisoner, 'gainst the laws and rights of nations.
I came not sword in hand into this realm,
I came a suppliant to implore the rights
Of hospitality, and threw myself
On the protection of my royal cousin.
Then was I seized by violence, and made
A captive, where I hoped for friendly help.
Say—is my conscience bound towards this state,
Has England just demands upon my duty?
I exercise the prisoner's sacred right,
When I attempt to break my bonds, and force

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With force to overcome, when I stir up
The powers of Europe to assert my cause.
Whatever means, in just and righteous war,
Are fair and knightly, such I may employ.
Murder alone, the secret bloody act,
My conscience and my pride alike forbid.
Murder would cast a stain upon my name;
I say 'twould stain me, it would not condemn,
But only give me to the sword of law.
For here the question, between me and England,
Is not of right, but of brute force alone.

BURLEIGH *(significantly)*.

You do not wisely, Madam, to appeal
To force; such words suit not a prisoner.

MARY.

I am the weak, and she the mighty one,—
Well—let her use her power, and end my life,
And by my fall let her secure her safety.
She must confess, 'tis barefaced power alone,
Not justice, that presides in these her acts.
Let her not boast, she wields the sword of law
To rid her of a hated rival's presence,
Or trick out in the sacred robes of justice
The shameful act of bloody violence.
The world will not be hoodwink'd by such juggling.
She may employ the murderer, not the judge.
Let her surcease the gainful fruits of crime
To hide beneath the holy mask of virtue,
And what she is, that let her dare to seem.

[*Exit.*

BURLEIGH.

See! she defies us, and she will defy us
Ev'n to the very block; this haughty spirit
Cannot be broken. Did the fatal sentence
Surprise her? Did you see her shed a tear,
Or change her colour? She disdains to sue
For favour or compassion. Well she knows
The doubt, which shakes the heart of England's queen.
And 'tis our fear, which gives her all this boldness.

PAULET.

My Lord High Treasurer, these big swelling words
Will soon desert her, when the pretext ceases.
If I might be so bold, some weighty forms
Have been neglected in this solemn cause.
Were it not better Babington and Tichburn
Had been confronted with her? Nau and Curl
Should also be produced before her.

BURLEIGH *(quick)*.

No!
Sir Amias, no! that were too much to venture.
We dare not risk the magic influence,
Which she possesses o'er the minds of men,
And melting softness of her womanish tears.
Were secretary Curl produced in court,
And set before her face, and were he called
To speak the word, on which her life depends,
His heart would faint, and he would soon recant
The cruel witness.

PAULET.

So will England's foes

Fill all the world with slanderous reports;
And the solemnities of this same trial
Will only seem a mockery of law.

BURLEIGH.

'Tis this, which fills our queen with anxious dread.
Oh! had this sower of dissension died,
Before she set her foot on English ground!

PAULET.

To that I say, Amen.

BURLEIGH.

That pain and sickness
Had worn away her heart strings in the prison!

PAULET.

It would have spared much mischief in this land.

BURLEIGH.

Yet had a common accident of nature
Snatched her away, we had been called her murderers.

PAULET.

'Tis true. We cannot hinder men's surmises.

BURLEIGH.

And yet they could not prove it. Such a case
Would make less talk.

PAULET.

And let them talk! 'Tis not
The loud, but just reproach, that wounds our honour.

BURLEIGH.

Not purity itself can 'scape reproach.
The public voice is always kind to those,
Whom fortune frowns on; envy still pursues,
With baleful tooth, the prosperous conqueror.

The sword of law, which graces a man's arm,
Is hated in a woman's hand. The world
Believes not in the justice of a woman,
When it descends to strike a female head.
In vain we judges spake as conscience bade,
She has forsooth the royal right to pardon,
And she must use it; 'tis not to be borne,
That she allow the law to take its course.

PAULET.

And therefore—

BURLEIGH.

Therefore shall she live? Oh! no!
She cannot, must not live. 'Tis even this
Which fills with anxious dread our sovereign's breast,
And drives sleep from her pillow. In her eyes
I read the ceaseless conflict of her soul.
Her mouth dares not give utterance to her wish,
Yet oft do her dumb looks thus speaking ask,
" Is there not one of all my faithful servants
" Whose zeal would ease me of the hateful choice,
" Either to tremble in perpetual fear
" Upon the throne, or my own royal cousin,
" The Scottish queen, by barbarous decree,
" Deliver to the headsman's axe."

PAULET.

There lies
The sad alternative, we cannot change it.

BURLEIGH.

And yet it might be changed, so thinks the queen,
If she had only more attentive servants.

PAULET.

Attentive.

BURLEIGH.

Some who to interpret knew
A dumb commission.

PAULET.

How! A dumb commission!

BURLEIGH.

Such as would not, when to their charge was given
A poisonous serpent, watch the intrusted foe
With careful tendance, like a precious gem.

PAULET *(significantly)*.

A precious gem is the unspotted name,
The unstained honour of our gracious queen,
Which we can never guard with too much care.

BURLEIGH.

When from Earl Shrewsbury's house the Scottish queen
Was ta'en, and to your faithful hands committed,
It was intended—

PAULET.

Let me hope, my Lord,
It was intended, that the weightiest task
Should be committed to the purest hands.
By heavens I never would have underta'en
This catchpole's office, had I not believed,
That it demanded the best man in England.
Let me not think I owe it to aught else
Than my good name.

BURLEIGH.

Let the report be spread,

Her frame is wasting, that her health decays
Daily; then let her quietly depart.
Thus will she vanish from the world's regard,
And your good name be saved.

PAULET.

But not my conscience.

BURLEIGH.

If your own aid you disincline to lend,
Perhaps you would permit a stranger's hand—

PAULET *(interrupting him).*

No murderer's foot shall dare approach her door,
While she lives under my protecting roof.
Her life is sacred to me, not more sacred
The crowned head of Queen Elizabeth.
You are her judges! judge her by the law.
And in due season, let the carpenter,
With axe and saw in hand, prepare the scaffold.
My castle gates shall open to receive
The sheriff and his headsman. But till then
My honour's pledged to keep her in safe guard.
And be assured that I will watch her so,
That she shall neither do nor suffer wrong.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Palace at St. James's.

The EARL OF KENT *and* SIR WILLIAM DAVISON *(meeting each other).*

DAVISON.

How now, my Lord of Kent? so soon returned
From tournament? and are the feats of arms
Already ended?

KENT.

Were you then not present
To see the knightly joust?

DAVISON.

I was detained
By business of my office.

KENT.

You have lost, Sir,
The finest show that taste did e'er devise,
Or noble bearing execute. Know then—
Beauty's chaste fortress was in view presented,
Invested by Desire; Lord Marshall, judge.
The seneschal, attended by ten knights
On the queen's part, conducted the defence,
The cavaliers from France attack the place.
First comes a herald forth, and bids the fort

Surrender in a pretty madrigal,
The chancellor makes answer from the walls.
Then played the artillery and wreaths of flowers,
Sweet-smelling costly essences were shot
Profusely from the mouths of pretty cannons.
In vain! the brave besiegers are repulsed,
And Sir Desire retreats with all his force.

DAVISON.

I fear, my Lord, this does forbode ill luck
To the French wooers and their embassy.

KENT.

Well, well, 'twas only play. In serious earnest
I think the fortress will at last surrender.

DAVISON.

Do you think so? I never can believe it.

KENT.

Already are the weightiest articles
Adjusted, and acceded to by France.
The Frenchman is content to celebrate
His forms of worship in a private chapel;
In public the religion of the state
To honour and protect. Oh! had you seen
The people's jubilee, when the news was spread.
For this eternal fear hung o'er the land,
That she might die without a bodily heir,
And England might again endure the yoke
Of popedom, should the Scottish queen succeed.

DAVISON.

An idle fear! Our English queen ascends
Her bridal bed, the Stuart mounts the scaffold.

Enter ELIZABETH, *led by* LEICESTER; *also* COUNT AUBESPINE, BELLIEVRE, EARL OF SHREWSBURY, LORD BURLEIGH, *with other French and English Lords.*

ELIZABETH.

Count Aubespine! I pity these good knights,
Whom zealous gallantry has hither drawn
Across the sea, that they must miss the splendour,
Which they are wont to see at St. Germain's.
I do not boast to emulate the pomp
And gorgeous feasts of France's royal mother:
But a well-mannered and a loyal people
Who throng about my chair with hearty blessings,
When I appear amongst them in the streets,
This is a spectacle I feel some pride
To shew to foreigners. The blaze of beauty,
Which blossoms in the court of Catherine,
Would only shame me and my homely dames.

AUBESPINE.

The wondering eyes of foreigners can see
One lady only at the English court.
But all, that in the beauteous sex enchants
The heart, stands here united in that one.

BELLIEVRE.

Most high and peerless majesty of England,
Permit us now humbly to take our leave.
And grant that we may glad our royal master
With the long-wished-for news. His love sick heart

Would not allow him to remain in Paris,
At Amiens he awaits the messengers,
Who bring the joyful tidings, and his posts
Extend as far as Calais, to convey
With swiftest speed to his delighted ear,
The gracious answer of your royal mouth.

ELIZABETH.

Count Bellievre, cease to press me now.
The season suits not, I again repeat,
To light the torch of marriage, for the sky
Looks louring on the land; the dismal crape
Would better far beseem us, than the robes
Of costly state, and hymeneal pomp.
For there approaches a disastrous blow
To plunge in deepest grief my heart and house.

BELLIEVRE.

Vouchsafe us but your promise, gracious queen,
And leave to happier times the accomplishment.

ELIZABETH.

Kings are but slaves and creatures of their state,
They dare not follow where their wishes lead.
To die unmarried was my constant aim;
Nor could I hope from after times to reap
A higher praise, than that mankind should read
Upon my tomb, "here lies the virgin queen."
But my good subjects are not so content,
They look with anxious forethought to the time,
When I must hence depart. 'Tis not enough
That blessings now are showered upon the land,
But I must sacrifice my heart's desire,

To insure their future welfare, and my state
Of blessed singleness, my highest good,
Give to my people's wishes, and receive
In lieu of freedom, a domestic lord.
By this they shew me, that in their esteem
I'm but a woman, though I thought to wield
The sceptre like a man and like a king.
Well do I know, he serves not God, who leaves
The path which nature points, and they, who sate
Before me on the throne, deserve our praise,
For that they oped the cloisters, and restored,
To social duties, many thousand souls,
The victims of mistaken piety.
But yet a queen, who does not spend her days
Unprofitably in listless indolence,
Who, with unceasing vigilance and zeal,
Performs the highest duties, should not she
Exempted stand from nature's common law,
Which bids the one half of the human race
Be subject to the other?

BELLIEVRE.

Mighty queen,
Each virtue, that can dignify a throne,
In thee shines brightest, nought else now remains,
But that thou prove a pattern to that sex,
Whose pearl thou art, of virtues such as form
A woman's proper happiness and praise.
I grant, that no man lives upon this earth
Adorned with worth and virtue to deserve,
That thou shouldst lay thy freedom at his feet.

But if heroic valour, virtue, birth,
And manly beauty can a mortal make
Worthy of such an honour, then—

ELIZABETH.

No doubt,
A union with a royal son of France
Must do me honour! Yes, I do confess,
If it must be so, if at length I must
Yield to my people's importunities,—
And I do fear me, they will prove too strong,—
I know no prince in Europe, whose deserts
Do more incline me, that I should renounce
The much-prized jewel of my single state,
And lay my freedom captive at his feet.
With this avouch, I pray you, be content.

BELLIEVRE.

It is a glorious hope, and yet it is
Only a hope; my master wishes more.

ELIZABETH.

What does he wish for more?

[*She draws a ring from her finger and looks thoughtfully at it.*

Has then a queen
No 'vantage o'er the simple burgher's wife?
Like token does denote congenial duty,
And serves congenial use.—The ring makes marriage,
And many rings together make a chain.
—Present this to his Highness. 'Tis as yet
No chain to bind my freedom, yet it may
In time become a hoop to bind me fast.

BELLIEVRE *(kneels to receive the ring).*

On his behalf, most mighty queen, I kneel
To accept this present, and imprint the kiss
Of duteous homage on my liege's hand.

ELIZABETH [*to the* EARL OF LEICESTER, *whom she has been steadfastly looking at during the last speech.*

Your leave, my Lord!

[*She takes the blue ribbon from him, and puts it on* BELLIEVRE.

Bedeck his Highness' person
With this attire, as I do here bedeck
Yourself, and make you member of my order.
Honi soit qui mal y pense! Henceforth
Let all mistrust between our nations cease,
And let the bonds of mutual faith and love
Unite the crowns of Britain and of France.

AUBESPINE.

Most mighty queen! this is a day of joy!
May it be so to all, and let no sad
And suffering spirit in our island mourn!
The beams of royal grace and mercy shine
Resplendent on thy brow, Oh! let one ray
Light on a luckless princess, whose distress
Touches both France and Britain—

ELIZABETH.

Noble count!
No more of this! let us not mix in one,
Two things by nature incompatible.
If France indeed desires to call me friend,

She must adopt my interests, and renounce
Her friendship with my foes—

AUBESPINE.

In thine own eyes
Would she not seem to act unworthily,
If in this festive treaty she forgot
The unhappy one, the widow of her king,
And by the ties of holy faith allied,—
Honour, humanity alike demand—

ELIZABETH.

In this regard I know to estimate
Her kindly intercession, France fulfils
The laws of friendship, and she must permit
That I fulfil the duties of a queen.

[*She makes a reverence to the French gentlemen, who with the Lords respectfully retire.*

Remain ELIZABETH, LEICESTER, BURLEIGH, *and* TALBOT. *The Queen sits down.*

BURLEIGH.

This day, renowned sovereign, hast thou crowned
Thy people's ardent wishes. Now at length
Secure can we enjoy the blissful days
Which thou hast given us, since we dread no more
The coming storms that loured upon the land.
One anxious care yet harbours in our breasts,
One sacrifice the general voice demands.
Grant us but this, so shall this happy day
Fix on a firm foundation England's weal.

ELIZABETH.

What does my people wish for? Speak, my Lord.

BURLEIGH.

The Stuart's head.—If thou the costly gift
Of freedom, and the dear bought light of truth
Wilt to thy people and this land secure,
She must no longer live. If we at length
May cease to tremble in perpetual fear,
Lest murder's hand attempt thy precious life,
The Scottish queen must die. Thou know'st it well,
Not all thy English subjects think alike.
Still does the Romish church, within this isle,
Numerous adherents of its worship hold,
Whose breasts are all with deadly hate inspired.
Their hearts are with this Stuart, and they stand
Leagued with the brothers of the house of Guise,
Opposed to thee in ceaseless enmity.
Long has this party, with insidious rage
Vowed an eternal war against thy throne,
And called to their assistance hellish arms.
At Rheims, where lives the archbishop cardinal,
There on the coast they forge their thunderbolts,
And thence with zealous industry they send
Their missions to this island, furious heads,
Bloody enthusiasts, masked in various shapes.
Thrice has the murderer whetted there his blade,
And, from the womb of that prolific gulph,
The hidden foes in countless numbers spring.
—While in her castle sits at Fotheringhay
The Atè of this strife, and with the torch

Of love lights up the flames of civil war.
Lured by her smiles, which she to all extends,
Our heedless youth rush on to certain fate.
Their watchword is her freedom, and their aim
To place thy royal crown upon her brow.
The race of Guise despise thy sacred rights,
They call thee base usurper of the throne
Crowned by mere chance; by their persuasion led,
This thoughtless woman bore thy royal arms.
Hope not for peace with that perfidious race,
Strike, or expect the blow, her life to thee
Is death, and by her death alone thou livest.

ELIZABETH.

My Lord! a dismal office you have chosen!
I know the zeal, which animates your heart,
The solid wisdom, which informs your speech.
And yet this wisdom, which demandeth blood,
My soul detests it. Think of milder means.
My noble Lord of Shrewsbury, give us now
Your free opinion on this weighty point.

TALBOT.

Thou gavest deserved praises to the zeal,
Which glows in Burleigh's faithful breast; my heart
Beats with a zeal as true, although my tongue
Is not so gifted with the powers of speech.
Long mayest thou live to be thy people's joy,
And to prolong, O queen, the reign of peace
Over this realm. Ne'er has this island seen
Such happy days, since its own princes ruled.
Oh! may it never buy its happiness

With loss of honour, may at least the eyes
Of Talbot long be closed before that day.

ELIZABETH.

Forbid it, heaven, that we should stain our honour.

TALBOT.

Then wilt thou think of other means to save
This kingdom, for the sentence now pronounced
Against the Queen of Scotland is unjust.
She is not subject to thy power.

ELIZABETH.

Then err
My privy council and my parliament,
And all the learned judges of the land,
Who with one voice have recognized my power.

TALBOT.

Majority of votes proves not the right.
England is not the world, thy parliament
Is not the assembled council of mankind.
The voice of England now, is not the voice
Of England that shall be, for as the tide
Of human passion turns, so also turns
Shifting opinion in her wavering scale.
Say not, thou must obey necessity,
And the compulsion of thy people's voice.
Whene'er thou wilt, thou mayest convince thyself
Thy will is free; make trial, and declare,
That thou abhorrest blood, and wilt protect
Thy sister's life; let those, who seek her ruin,
Feel the full measure of thy royal scorn:
Soon wilt thou see this stern necessity

Vanish, and right assume the shape of wrong.
'Tis thou must pass the sentence, thou alone.
Trust not to this unsteady fragile reed,
But follow thy own mild suggestions. God
Planted not harshness in the tender breast
Of woman; and the founders of this realm,
Who placed its sceptre in a female hand,
Declare that mercy, not severity,
Should shine the brightest gem in the king's crown.

ELIZABETH.

My kingdom's foe finds in Earl Shrewsbury
A zealous advocate. I must prefer
Those counsellors, who love their country's weal.

TALBOT.

She was allowed no advocate, no one
Durst venture to stand forth in her defence,
And risk thine anger. Take it not amiss,
That an old man, whom on the verge of life
No earthly hope has now the power to charm,
Should plead for the deserted prisoner.
Let not men say, that passion's voice alone
Rules in thy council, and base selfishness,
While mercy and compassion have no tongue.
She stands alone, all are against her leagued;
Thyself hast never yet beheld her face,
And in thy heart nought pleads in her behalf.
I seek not to defend her crimes—Men say,
She caused her husband's murder. This we know,
She married with the murderer; but this act
(A heinous one no doubt) was done in days

Of trouble and dismay, when civil war
Had reared its bloody standard, and she saw
Herself surrounded by a lawless band
Of bold unruly vassals; then she sought
Protection in a powerful chieftain's arms.
Who knows what treacherous arts this man employed
To gain his ends, for womankind is frail.

ELIZABETH.

Who talks of woman's frailty? In the sex
There are some vigorous minds. Whilst I am by,
No one shall say that womankind are frail.

TALBOT.

Thy youth was schooled by stern adversity.
Life did not turn to thee a face of smiles.
'Twas only at a distance that thou sawest
The throne, the grave stood open at thy feet.
In Woodstock and in London's gloomy tower
The gracious father of this kingdom trained
Thy tender years in duty's rigid lore.
The flatterer came not there. 'Twas there retired
Far from the idle vanities of life,
Thy spirit early learned to feed itself
With studious contemplation, and to prize
The real blessings of this fleeting scene.
But she, poor helpless—in her earliest youth
Transplanted to the court of France, was plunged
In gulphs of vanity and thoughtless joy.
There in the tumult of perpetual feast,
The wholesome voice of truth ne'er reached her ear.
Her sense was dazzled by the blaze of vice,

And carried headlong down the stream of ruin.
On her had nature beauty's idle charms
Bestowed, she shone the loveliest of her sex,
Nor did her form less than her royal birth—

ELIZABETH.

My Lord of Shrewsbury, recollect yourself!
Think, that we here in solemn council sit.
These charms must be of wonderous potency,
To wake such fervour in an old man's breast.
My Lord of Leicester, you alone are silent!
Does that, which makes him eloquent, bind your tongue?

LEICESTER.

Amaze, O queen, and wonder bind my tongue,
That thus with horrors they abuse thine ear,
That idle tales, which set the credulous mob
Agape in London streets, should find their way
Even to thy council chamber, and the breasts
Of wisest men fill with unwonted fears.
I cannot cease to wonder, I confess,
That this land-lacking queen, driven from her throne
(A little throne she knew not how to keep,)
The sport of her own vassals, and the scorn
Of Scotland, should at once become the cause
Of terror in a prison. What, by heavens!
Can make her now an object of thy fear?
That she lays claim to England, that the Guises
Acknowledge not thy right as lawful queen?
And can such gainsayers overturn the right
Which birth has given thee, and the parliaments
By solemn resolutions have confirmed?

Is she not by thy father Henry's will
Silently thrown aside, and will this realm
So happily possessed of the new light,
Conspire to place a papist on the throne?
Will they desert thee, their beloved queen,
And bow to her, who slew her royal lord?
What would these blusterers, who torment thy life
With fears about this heiress to the throne,
Who cannot have thee married quick enough,
To save from future dangers church and state?
See we not thee in freshest bloom of youth,
While she from day to day fades in decay?
By heavens, I hope, thou wilt these many years
Walk o'er her grave, nor meantime feel the need,
With thine own arm, to bring her to her end.

BURLEIGH.

Lord Leicester has not always spoken thus.

LEICESTER.

'Tis true, in court I voted for her death,
But in the council I speak otherwise.
We do not here debate the point of right,
Only the policy. Is this a time
To talk of fears, when France her only stay
Forsakes her; France's royal son receives
Thy hand, and gives us thence the pleasing hope
Of a new race to fill the English throne.
Then wherefore kill her? She's already dead.
Contempt is the true death. Let us take heed
Lest pity bring her back to life again.
Therefore my counsel is, to let her live,

But that she live under the headsman's axe.
Confirm the sentence, but suspend the blow,
Till some bold arm is raised on her behalf,
Then let it quickly fall upon her head.

ELIZABETH *(rises)*.

My Lords, your several counsels I have heard,
And thank you for your zeal. With God to help,
By whom kings reign, your reasonings I will try,
And choose, what most my judgment shall approve.

Enter SIR AMIAS PAULET, *with* MORTIMER.

ELIZABETH.

Here comes Sir Amias Paulet. Worthy Sir,
What news?

PAULET.

Most high and gracious Majesty,
My nephew, who but lately has returned,
From foreign parts, most humbly at thy feet
Offers the homage of his youthful vow.
Receive it graciously, and let him grow
In the warm sunshine of thy royal smiles.

MORTIMER *(falls on one knee)*.

Long live my royal mistress, may renown
And fortune bloom upon her diadem!

ELIZABETH.

Rise, Sir. You're welcome back to English ground.
You've travelled far through Europe, and have seen
Paris and Rome, and made some stay at Rheims.
Tell us, what plots our enemies devise.

MORTIMER.

May heaven confound them and their treacherous wiles,
And back return unto the shooter's breast
The arrows, which they send against my queen!

ELIZABETH.

Saw you then Morgan, and the crafty bishop
Of Rosse?

MORTIMER.

I sought the acquaintance and resort
Of all the Scottish exiles, who at Rheims
Are weaving darksome plots against this isle.
Into their confidence I stole myself,
In hopes I might unveil their secret schemes.

PAULET.

They have intrusted him with private letters,
Written in cyphers, for the Scottish Queen,
Which he with loyal faith gives to our hands.

ELIZABETH.

Say what their hopes, and what their latest plans.

MORTIMER.

They were amazed, as if a thunderbolt
Had fallen upon them, when they heard that France
Forsakes their cause, and joins the solemn league
With England; now they cast their eyes to Spain.

ELIZABETH.

Such news I lately had from Walsingham.

MORTIMER.

Also a bull, which from the Vatican
But now Pope Sextus had against thee hurled,

Arrived at Rheims, just as I left the place,
And the next ship will bring it to this isle.

LEICESTER.

England no longer trembles at such arms.

BURLEIGH.

Such arms are fearful in the enthusiast's hand.

ELIZABETH *(looking steadfastly at* MORTIMER*)*.

They say at Rheims you visited the schools,
And at the bishop's feet forswore your faith.

MORTIMER.

So I pretended, that I do confess,
Such was my anxious wish to serve my queen.

[ELIZABETH *(to* PAULET, *who reaches papers to her)*.

What have you here?

PAULET.

A letter to thyself,
Intrusted to me by the Scottish Queen.

BURLEIGH *(eagerly snatching at it)*.

Give it to me.

PAULET.

Your pardon, my Lord Treasurer.
I was commanded to deliver it
Into my queen's own hand. The Stuart says,
I am her enemy, and so I am,
But of her vices only, what comports
With my own duties, I would not refuse.

[*The Queen had taken the letter, and while she reads it,* LEICESTER *and* MORTIMER *speak a few words privately together.*

BURLEIGH *(to* PAULET*)*.

What can this letter mean? Idle complaints,
Which never should have reached the piteous heart
Of our most gracious queen!

PAULET.

What it contains
She did not seek to hide. Therein she begs
To see our royal mistress face to face.

BURLEIGH *(hastily)*.

That shall she never!

TALBOT.

Wherefore not, she begs
Nothing unreasonable.

BURLEIGH.

What! Shall she claim
So great a condescension, she who urged
The murderer's arm against the royal life?
Surely the man, who loves his queen, could ne'er
Suggest such false and treacherous advice.

TALBOT.

If so our mistress wills it, would you wish
To stay the indulgent movements of her heart.

BURLEIGH.

The Stuart is condemned! the fatal axe
Suspended o'er her head. It would degrade
And lessen majesty, to see the head
To death devoted. And the execution
Can be delayed no longer. If the queen
Should grant the interview, such royal grace
Would seal the pardon of the criminal.

ELIZABETH *(after she has read the letter, drying her tears).*

Oh! what is man and this world's happiness!
How low has fortune sunk this ill-starred queen,
Whose birth-day hope with brightest radiance hailed.
For she was called to fill the eldest throne
Of christendom, and in her lofty thoughts
Already saw three crowns upon her head.
How different now the language and the tone
From that she used, when she assumed the arms
Of England, and the flatterers of her court
Stiled her the queen of the two British isles.
—Pardon, my Lords, my heart is cut with grief,
Sadness oppresses me, my soul weeps blood,
To think that earthly grandeur fades away,
And that the sad vicissitudes of life
Draw near, and point their presages at me.

TALBOT.

O gracious sovereign! God has touched thy heart,
Obey the heavenly motion. Grievously
Has she been punished for her grievous sins.
'Tis time the hard probation now should end.
Stretch forth thy hand to raise this low-fallen queen,
And like a radiant angel form descend
Into the gloomy dungeons of her prison.

BURLEIGH.

Great queen, be firm. Let no insidious touch
(However in itself deserving praise)
Of tender feeling lead thy heart astray.
Let no rash act deprive thee of the power

To do what stern necessity demands.
Thou canst not pardon her, thou canst not save.
Provoke not then an idle world's reproach,
That thou, with cruel mockery and scorn,
Didst on thy trembling victim feast thine eyes.

LEICESTER.

My Lords, we may not pass our proper bounds.
The queen is wise, she needs not our advice,
To choose the fitting path. This interview
Between two queens partakes not of the course
Of common law. The Stuart stands condemned,
Not by the monarch's will, but by the law.
It is most worthy of our glorious queen,
That she obey the impulse of her heart,
Although the law relaxes not its course.

ELIZABETH.

My Lords, you may withdraw. We shall find means,
What princely favour and necessity
Shall at our hands require, to reconcile.
But now—retire.

[*The Lords retire; at the door she calls* MORTIMER *back.*

Stay, Mortimer, a word!

[*After measuring him a few moments with her eyes.*

Courage and self-possession you have shewn
Beyond your years; he, who has learnt so soon
To play the difficult dissembler's part,
Is of full age before his time, and makes
The time of his probation so much shorter.

My oracle foretells that you are called
To tread a glorious path, what it foretells,
You'll find, I have the power to bring to pass.

MORTIMER.

Most glorious sovereign, what my humble powers
Can do or suffer, is at your command.

ELIZABETH.

You well know mine and England's enemy.
Her hate against me is implacable,
And inexhaustible her bloody schemes.
Till now my life has been the care of heaven,
But on my head the crown still tottering hangs,
While she yet breathes, to animate the hopes
Of desperate zealots, and direct their aims.

MORTIMER.

Her life depends upon thy sovereign will.

ELIZABETH.

Ah, Sir! already had I hoped to reach
The goal, and find my race not yet begun.
I wished to leave her to due course of law,
And my own hands to keep unstained with blood.
The sentence is pronounced, but what is gained?
It must be executed, Mortimer!
And I that execution must command.
The hatred of the deed pursues me still,
For I must bear a part, nor can I save
Outward appearances.

MORTIMER.

Why not defy
Outward appearance, when the cause is just.

ELIZABETH.

You know not yet the world. The outward deed
Each man may censure, but the inward thought
Is free. I cannot force men to believe,
That right is on my side; therefore I must
Take heed, that what I do to cause her death,
Shall be the subject of eternal doubt.
In such ambiguous deeds of double form
Darkness alone can shield the doer's name.
Those measures are the worst, that stand avowed,
But that which is not yielded, is not lost.

MORTIMER *(considering)*.

Then sure it were the best—

ELIZABETH *(quick)*.

Yes, 'twere the best—
'Tis by your mouth my guardian angel speaks.
Go, worthy Sir, go forth, and execute—
You see the affair—you hit the mark aright—
Go, be not like your uncle.—

MORTIMER *(perplexed)*.

Is the knight
Acquainted with your wishes?

ELIZABETH.

I repent,
That I revealed them to him.

MORTIMER.

An old man
May plead for pardon. His increasing years
Have made him timorous. Such an enterprize
Requires a young man's boldness.

ELIZABETH *(quick)*.

Dare I trust—

MORTIMER.

My hand thou mayest command, save thou thy name
As best thou canst—

ELIZABETH.

Yes, Sir! when some days hence,
Thou wakest me with the message, Mary Stuart,
Thy bloody foe, departed yesternight—

MORTIMER.

You may rely on me.

ELIZABETH.

When will my head
Repose in quiet sleep?

MORTIMER.

The next new moon
Shall end thy fears and dangers.

ELIZABETH.

Sir, farewell!
And let me pray you, take it not amiss,
That I must shroud my thanks in darkest night.
True friendship needs not words; the closest bands
Are those knit by the hand of mystery. [*Exit.*

MORTIMER.

Go, thou perfidious, false, dissembling queen,
As thou deceiv'st the world, so do I thee.
Treason to thee is honesty and truth.
Do I look like a murderer? Didst thou read
Abandoned guilt imprinted on my brow?
Trust only to my arm, use not thine own,

Play off before the world this canting shew
Of tender-hearted mercy, while thou hopest
In secret that my arm will serve thy turn,
So for the rescue do we gain delay.
Thou wilt exalt me—shewest me from afar
The glorious recompense—and were the prize
Thy royal self, and condescending charms!
What art thou, and this prize that thou canst give?
Ambition's pageant has no charms for me.
Around *her* in eternal chorus play
The graceful forms of youthfulness and joy.
The bliss of heaven reposes on her breast,
Whilst thou hast only lifeless wealth to give.
The sole and highest good of human life,
When heart with heart, possessing and possessed,
Is joined in sweet forgetfulness of self,
This crown of woman hast thou never known:
Ne'er hast thou blessed a husband with thy love.
—But I must wait the coming of this lord,
To give the letter—what a hateful task!
I have no liking for this courtier.
I can myself preserve her, I alone,
And be the danger and the prize my own.

Enter PAULET, *meeting him as he is going out.*

PAULET.

What has the queen said to thee?

MORTIMER.

Nothing, Sir;
Nought worth repeating.

PAULET *(fixes him with earnest look).*

Hear me, Mortimer!
It is a slippery and dangerous ground,
On which thou tread'st. The favouring smile of kings
Is tempting, youthful blood pants after honours.
—Let not ambition draw thee into crime.

MORTIMER.

It was yourself, who brought me to the court.

PAULET.

I wish I had not done it. At the court
We did not win the honours of our house.
Nephew, stand fast—buy not thy gains too dear.
Wound not thy conscience.

MORTIMER.

Uncle, what means this?

PAULET.

Whatever promises of future greatness
The queen may make, trust not her glozing words.
She will deny thee, when the deed is done,
And to preserve unspotted her own name,
Avenge the murder, which she did command.

MORTIMER.

How say you, murder?

PAULET.

Nay, dissemble not.
I know the order which the queen has given.
She hopes that thy ambitious youth will prove
More courteous than my stiff unbending age.
Hast thou professed compliance? hast thou?

MORTIMER.

Uncle!

PAULET.

If thou hast done so, my curse light on thee!
I do reject thee.

LEICESTER *(entering)*.

Worthy Sir, permit
A word with Mortimer. Our gracious queen
Beholds him with a favouring eye. She wills,
That to his custody the Scottish Queen
Be with full powers committed. She relies
On his fidelity.

PAULET.

Does she? That's well—

LEICESTER.

What said you, Sir?

PAULET.

The queen relies on him,
And I, my Lord, rely on what I see,
By this good light, with my two open eyes.

[*Exit* PAULET.

LEICESTER *(surprised)*.

What does Sir Amias mean!

MORTIMER.

My Lord, I know not.
This unexpected favour from the queen—

LEICESTER.

Do you deserve this confidence?

MORTIMER.

My Lord,
'Tis even this question I would ask of you.

LEICESTER.

You wished a private conference with me, Sir.

MORTIMER.

I first would be assured that I may trust you.

LEICESTER.

Who gives me such assurance of yourself.
—Be not offended that I have my doubts.
I see you wear two faces at this court,
One must be false, then tell me which is true.

MORTIMER.

My Lord, 'tis even so I see yourself.

LEICESTER.

Who then shall first begin the confidence.

MORTIMER.

He who has least to risk.

LEICESTER.

That is yourself.

MORTIMER.

Nay, 'tis not so. Your evidence, my Lord,
Since you have so much power and consequence,
Could strike me to the earth, while mine could nought
Avail against your rank and influence.

LEICESTER.

'Tis there you err. In every other case
I can do much, but in this tender point,
Which I abandon to your faith and honour,
I am the weakest man about the court,
The slenderest evidence would throw me down.

MORTIMER.

Since the all-powerful Leicester condescends

To make so humble an acknowledgment,
Then must I think more highly of myself,
And be towards him alike magnanimous.

LEICESTER.

First give your confidence. I'll in return
Give mine.

MORTIMER *(pulling out the letter hastily).*

The Queen of Scotland sends you this.

LEICESTER *(starting, eagerly seizes it).*

Speak softly, Sir, some one may hear us—Ha!
This is her portrait.

[*Kisses it, and gazes upon it with dumb rapture.*

MORTIMER *(who during the reading had narrowly watched him).*

Now, my Lord, I trust you.

LEICESTER *(after he has hastily run through the letter).*

Know you, Sir, what this letter does contain?

MORTIMER.

Not I in faith.

LEICESTER.

Has she in very deed
Said nought of its contents?

MORTIMER.

Nothing, my Lord.
She said, you would explain this riddle to me.
For 'tis in truth a riddle, that Lord Leicester,
The favourite of his queen, and the sworn foe
Who sate in judgment on the hapless Mary,
Should be the man, from whom in her distress

The queen expects deliverance, and yet
It must be so, since both your voice and eyes
Attest the secret feelings of your heart.

LEICESTER.

First let me ask, how comes it that yourself
Take such a heartfelt interest in her fate,
And what has won her confidence?

MORTIMER.

My Lord,
That in few words I can explain to you.
I have at Rome renounced my faith, and stand
Leagued in close friendship with the house of Guise.
A letter from the archbishop cardinal
Gave me credentials to the Scottish queen.

LEICESTER.

I was informed of this your change of faith,
Which towards you first 'waked my confidence.
Give me your hand—pardon my causeless doubts—
I cannot be too cautious and discreet,
Knowing how Walsingham and Burleigh hate me,
And that to snare me they have spread their nets.
You might have been their creature and their tool,
To draw me to the toils.

MORTIMER.

How poor a part
Does such a great lord play at this same court!
Indeed I pity you.

LEICESTER.

Gladly I throw
Myself upon the bosom of a friend,

To ease me of this wearisome constraint.
Perhaps you wonder, Sir, that I so soon
Have changed my heart towards the Scottish Queen.
In truth I never hated her—the times
Have forced me to appear her enemy.
She was (you may have heard) my destined bride,
Long since, ere she to Darnley gave her hand,
While yet the blaze of greatness round her smiled.
Coldly I then refused the proffered boon,
But now in prison at the gates of death,
I seek her at the hazard of my life.

MORTIMER.

Such conduct is most truly brave.

LEICESTER.

Meantime,
The bearing of the case had changed its form.
It was ambition, which had steeled my heart,
Against the charms of beauty and of youth.
Then thought I Mary's hand too poor, and hoped
To gain possession of the English Queen .

MORTIMER.

It is well known she gave you preference
Before all others.

LEICESTER.

So indeed it seemed.
Now after ten years of unwearied courtship,
Of most abhorred constraint—Oh, Sir! my spirit
Rises within me—I must ease my heart
Of this oppressive weight—men think me happy—
Did they but know the weary chains that move,

Their envy!—Now that I for ten long years
Have fed the altar of her vanity
With daily incense, and have watched each change
Of her capricious fancies with the base
Submission of a slave, the wretched tool
Of every little, wayward, stubborn whim,
One day caressed with tenderness, the next
Rebuffed with proud disdain—tortured alike
By love or coldness—like a prisoner
Watched with the argus eyes of jealousy,
Schooled like an arrant stripling, like a page
Chided and flouted—language has no words
To paint this hell!

MORTIMER.

Indeed 'tis hard to bear!

LEICESTER.

Then at the last the prize slips from my grasp.
Another comes to rob me of the fruit.
A young and blooming husband steps between
Me and my rights. I now must quit the stage,
Where I so long have borne me as the first.
'Tis not her hand alone, this stranger threats
To rob me also of her princely smiles;
For he deserves her love, and she is woman.

MORTIMER.

He is a son of Catherine: he has learnt
The art of flattery in a happy school.

LEICESTER.

So are my fortunes foundered—in the wreck
I seek some plank to float on—and my eye

Turns to the object of my youthful hope.
The form of Mary in her blooming charms
Stood fresh before me, youth and beauty gained
Once more the full possession of their rights.
No longer cold ambition ruled my heart,
And I felt what a jewel I had lost.
With horror now I see her sunk thus low
In misery, sunk through my unhappy fault.
And now hope whispers me, that by my aid
She may be saved, and may at last be mine.
I have succeeded, through a trusty hand,
To lay before her how my heart is changed.
The letter, which you brought me even now,
Assures me she forgives, and that herself
Will be my great reward, if I can save her.

MORTIMER.

And what has she to thank you for? You made
No struggle when her judges sentenced her,
Nay, you yourself voted that she should die!
You waited for a miracle—the light
Of truth must first beam on her jailor's nephew;
The hand of heaven must in the Vatican
Prepare the heart of her deliverer,
Else would she ne'er have found the way to you.

LEICESTER.

Ah, Sir! you little know what pangs it cost me,
Even then from Talbot's castle she was ta'en
To Fotheringhay, and given in strictest charge
To Paulet, all access to her was barred.
Therefore I sought to make the world believe,

I was her sworn and bitter enemy.
But do not think, I would have tamely borne
To see her led to death! no, I had hope,
And still have hope, to ward the fatal blow,
Till we find means to ope her prison doors.

MORTIMER.

Such means are found.—Your noble confidence
Deserves a like return.—She shall be freed—
'Tis therefore I am here—the plan's matured.
Your powerful aid assures us of success.

LEICESTER.

How say you? You affright me—Would you then—

MORTIMER.

With arms in hand I'll force her prison doors,
I have associates, all's in readiness.

LEICESTER.

You have associates! confidants! Ah me!
What perilous venture would you plunge me in!
And do they know me privy to the plot?

MORTIMER.

Fear nought. Without your aid the plot was formed,
Without your aid we should have struck the blow.
Nor needed she to thank you for your help.

LEICESTER.

And can you then assure me on your faith,
My name has not been mentioned in your league.

MORTIMER.

That be assured. But why so serious, Earl,
At hearing news, such as your heart must wish?
You fain would save from death the Scottish Queen,

And win her person, you find zealous friends,
Beyond your hopes, heaven sends you ready means
To gain your purpose, yet you shew less joy
Than anxious terror and perplexity.

LEICESTER.

We must not trust to arms; these desperate means
Have too much peril.

MORTIMER.

So have slow delays.

LEICESTER.

I say, Sir Knight, we must not risk so much.

MORTIMER *(ironically)*.

True, you should not, who wish to win her charms,
We, who would only save her, need not pause
So cautiously.

LEICESTER.

Young man, you are too rash,
In such a perilous and thorny path.

MORTIMER.

You—too discreet, where honour is at stake.

LEICESTER.

I see the meshes that are round us spread.

MORTIMER.

My spirit tells me I can burst these toils.

LEICESTER.

This spirit is but mad fool-hardiness.

MORTIMER.

My Lord, your wisdom is not bravery.

LEICESTER.

You wish perhaps to die like Babington.

MORTIMER.

You ne'er will emulate great Norfolk's fame.

LEICESTER.

Norfolk did not possess his lovely bride.

MORTIMER.

He proved at least that he deserved her love.

LEICESTER.

If we should fail, we drag her after us.

MORTIMER.

If we stand idle, she must surely die.

LEICESTER.

This mad precipitance will ruin all.
Your blind and thoughtless rashness will undo
The schemes, which I so happily had planned.

MORTIMER.

What are these happy schemes that you have planned?
What have you done to save her? Tell me now!
Had I been such a villain as the queen
Believes me, had my heart been hard enough
To murder Mary, as she gave command,
Tell me what preparations you have made
To save her life.

LEICESTER *(astonished)*.

Has then the queen, indeed,
Given you this bloody order?

MORTIMER.

She mistook
My character, as Mary has done yours.

LEICESTER.

And have you promised her, to do the deed?

MORTIMER.

Lest she should hire another's murderous hands,
I offered mine to her.

LEICESTER.

There did you well.
This gives us leisure, for she rests secure,
Lulled by your specious promise, Mary's fate
Hangs in suspense, and we gain time to act.

MORTIMER *(impatient)*.

No, we are losing time—

LEICESTER.

She counts on you,
And therefore will she more play off the shew
Of grace and mercy in the eyes of men.
Perhaps, I may persuade her by my arts
To grant her rival the wished interview,
And by this stratagem we bind her hands.
Burleigh says well. The sentence must remain
A mere dead letter, if she sees her face.
—Yes to the attempt I summon all my powers.

MORTIMER.

And what advantage do you thereby gain?
When she discovers, that by specious guile
I've mocked her confidence, that Mary lives,
Shall we not stand just where we did before?
Thus will she ne'er be freed, her mildest doom
Will be eternal bondage. At the last,
You must resolve upon some bold exploit,
Why not resolve then from the first? The power
Lies in your hands. You can collect a force

To bear down all resistance, if you arm
The nobles who reside within the castles
Throughout your vast domains! The Scottish queen
Has many secret friends; the noble houses
Of Howard and of Percy, though their chiefs
Are laid in dust, still have heroic souls
Who only wait, till some more powerful lord
Shall give the signal of revolt. Throw off
The mask, and draw the sword! Like a true knight
Defend your lovely lady, fight for her
A great and noble fight. Whene'er you will,
You may be master of the English queen,
And seize her person. Draw her to your castles,
Whither she oft has followed you. Then shew
Yourself a man! assume the master's tone,
And keep her fast, till she sets Mary free.

LEICESTER.

Your words astonish me.—This giddy dream
Has crazed your senses. Know you where you are?
Know you the fashion of this court, how close
This female reign has locked men's spirits up?
You seek in vain the heroic souls, that erst
Were rife on English ground. All is submiss
And tamely bowed under a woman's key,
The springs and thews of courage quite relaxed.
Follow my guidance. Venture nothing rash.
—I hear a footstep—go—

MORTIMER.

Mary yet hopes!
Must I return to her with empty hands?

LEICESTER.

Convey to her my pledge of endless love.

MORTIMER.

Bring it yourself! I offered you my aid
To free the queen from her imprisonment,
And not to carry your love messages.

[*Exit* MORTIMER.

ELIZABETH *(entering)*.

Who was't that left you? I heard some one speak.

LEICESTER *(turning quick and affrighted towards her)*.

It was Sir Mortimer.

ELIZABETH.

How now, my Lord?
You seem confused.

LEICESTER *(recovering himself)*.

I am indeed, my queen.
Ne'er did I see thy beauty so resplendent,
My sight is dazzled with thy heavenly charms.
Ah me!

ELIZABETH.

Why do you sigh!

LEICESTER.

Have I not cause?
When I behold thy beauteous form, the thought
Of what I soon must lose, o'erwhelms my soul
With nameless anguish.

ELIZABETH.

What is it you lose?

LEICESTER.

I lose thy heart, thy lovely beauteous self.
Soon wilt thou, in a youthful husband's arms,
Enjoy the soft delights of wedded love,
Without a rival will he fill thy heart.
He is descended from a line of kings,
Which I am not, but I defy the world
To shew me one upon this earthly ball,
Whose heart glows with a purer, tenderer love.
The Duke of Anjou ne'er has seen thee, he
Can only love thy splendour and renown.
I love thee for thyself. Hadst thou been born
The poorest shepherdess, and I a prince,
Glad to thy lowly station would I stoop,
And at thy feet resign my diadem.

ELIZABETH.

Pity me, Dudley, do not chide. I dare not
Consult my heart. Alas! its choice had been
Far different. How I envy other women,
Who dare exalt the object of their love.
Such happiness is not reserved for me,
To place a crown upon the brow of him,
Whose image lives the nearest to my heart.
It was permitted to the Scottish queen
To give her hand where her affections led.
She placed no bridle on her will, but drank
The cup of pleasure to the very dregs.

LEICESTER.

And now she drinks the bitter cup of pain.

ELIZABETH.

The judgments of mankind she set at nought.
She played life's easy game, and never took
That yoke upon her, which I learned to bear.
Yet I too might have had my claims to taste
The pleasures of the world, but I preferred
The serious duties of my princely state.
And yet from all men has she won applause,
Because she only strove to be the woman,
And youth and age alike sigh for her charms.
Such are you men—votaries of pleasure all!
Fickle and wanton ever in your aims,
You cannot prize what you must reverence.
See how old Talbot felt the glow of youth,
When he began to descant on her charms.

LEICESTER.

Forgive the old man. He was her keeper once,
The cunning one has fooled him with her wiles.

ELIZABETH.

And is it true her beauty is so rare?
So oft has fame loudly proclaimed its praise,
That I would fain know what I should believe.
Painters are flatterers and their portraits false,
I'll only trust the voucher of my eyes.
—Why do you gaze so strangely?

LEICESTER.

My mind's eye
Saw thee e'en now stationed by Mary's side.
—Yes, I confess I oft have felt a wish,
If it could be but secretly contrived,

To see thee placed beside the Scottish queen.
Then wouldst thou for the first time fully taste
The sweets of victory,—and she the shame
To see with her own eyes—for envy's glance
Is vigilant and keen,—herself surpassed.
Yes, she would feel herself as much o'ermatched
In nobleness of form, and princely grace,
As she must yield to thee the undoubted palm
Of every virtue which adorns the sex.

ELIZABETH.

In years she has the advantage.

LEICESTER.

Has she so?
No eye can find it out. Her sufferings
Have brought down age upon her ere the time.
Yes, and if aught could sting her to the heart,
'Twould be to see thee as a destined bride.
Her hopes in life are sunk in evening shade,
Whilst thine are brightening to the perfect day.
She sees thee wooed by France's royal son,
She, who has always plumed herself so high
On her connexion with the house of France,
And still talks big of France's mighty aid.

ELIZABETH *(negligently)*.

I'm teazed to grant this interview.

LEICESTER *(eagerly)*.

Then grant it,
Not as a favour, but a punishment.
Thou canst upon the scaffold end her life,
But that would less afflict her, than to see

Herself eclipsed by thy superior charms.
Thus wilt thou kill her, by the very means
By which she sought thy life. When she beholds
Thy beauty decked by modesty, and placed
In glory's temple, by the unspotted fame
Of virtue, which she lightly threw away,
Exalted by the regal state, and now
Crowned by the softening touch of tender love,
How will she droop and sink in black despair.
Yes—when I gaze upon thy lovely form,
Ne'er did I see thy beauty shine so bright
To vanquish meaner charms; with nymph-like step
When thou didst pass the chamber door, my sense
As by some glorious vision was o'er-powered.
Couldst thou appear before her, in this guise,
Even as thou art, thy triumph were assured.

ELIZABETH.

Now! no, no! Leicester, not just now, I must
First weigh the matter, and with Burleigh—

LEICESTER.

Burleigh!
He only thinks of what can save the state,
But as a woman also thou hast rights,
And in this tender point, the true appeal
Lies to thy heart The statesman's policy
Has here no voice. And yet true policy
Demands that thou shouldst see her. Such a step
Would prove the greatness of thy soul, and win
From all the praise of magnanimity.

Hereafter mayest thou use whatever means
Seem fit, to rid thee of a hated foe.

ELIZABETH.

Leicester, I fear 'twould ill become my state,
To see my royal cousin sunk so low
In wretchedness and want. They tell me nought
Of regal pomp is left her, and the sight
Of her distress would point reproach at me.

LEICESTER.

Thy royal foot need not approach her doors.
List to my counsel. Lucky chance e'en now
Has crowned our wish. To day the royal hunt
Passes by Fotheringhay. There in the park
The Stuart may appear, then as by chance
Thou wilt come thither—no one will surmize
The aforethought purpose—nor unless it please,
Needst thou accost her—

ELIZABETH.

Must I play the fool?
Well—'tis your folly, Leicester, and not mine.
To day, your wishes I will not gainsay,
Because to day of all my faithful subjects
I've given you deepest cause to grieve. Then be it
Only your whim— [*Looking tenderly at him.*
By this you may perceive
How much kind inclination sways my breast
To grant, though it approve not, your request.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

Landscape in a park. The foreground planted with trees; behind an extensive prospect.

MARY *comes forward, running swiftly under the trees,* HANNAH KENNEDY *follows slowly.*

KENNEDY.

You step in haste, as if your feet had wings,
My aged limbs cannot o'ertake their speed.

MARY.

Oh! let me enjoy my new liberty's blessing,
Once more be a child, and do thou with me play.
Oh! let me, upon the green meadow rejoicing,
With the feet of the roebuck bound wildly away.

At length have I 'scaped from the horrors of prison,
At length have I 'scaped from my dungeon's dark gloom.
Let me quickly inhale the soft breezes of heaven
By the side of the stream, where the sweet flowerets bloom.

KENNEDY.

Oh! dearest lady, 'tis but a short while
Your cruel jailor leaves you; look around,

And see the dismal wall, that shuts us in,
Faintly concealed behind the tufted trees.

MARY.

Thanks to these friendly trees so fresh and green,
Whose spreading boughs my prison walls conceal,
Fain would I dream, that I'm at large again,
Why wake me, and the unwelcome truth reveal?

Round me heaven spreads its glorious canopy,
Free roves my sight through space's boundless reign.
Yon clouds, that roll their misty shapes on high,
Come from my ancient kingdom's loved domain.
And southward as they move in mazy dance,
Fly towards the lovely coasts of France.

Ye happy clouds, that so gaily and fleet
Play your gambols in upper air,
Oh! greet me the land of my childhood sweet,
For I am in bondage here.
No other messenger have I,
Than you that so swift and lightly fly,
Freely you float in air serene,
You are not subject to this queen.

KENNEDY.

Ah, dearest lady! you are beside yourself,
This new gained freedom has disturbed your sense.

MARY.

See a fisherman bringing his boat to land,
Perhaps he could save me, though small his skiff,

It might carry me soon to some friendly strand.
With hard labour and toil his poor limbs are stiff.
How richly I'd lade him with princely treasure,
Such a draught he would make, as he ne'er made before;
His nets should supply him with wealth above measure,
Would he waft me away to a southern shore.

KENNEDY.

What hopeless wishes! Yonder see you not
The watchful spies that dog us from afar?
A rigid interdiction has gone forth
To scare all piteous beings from our path.

MARY.

No, my good Hannah. Trust me, not in vain
My prison doors are opened. This small grace
Forebodes still better fortune. Well I ween
I owe this to the active hand of love.
I recognize in this great Leicester's arm.
They mean to soften my captivity
By slow degrees, to lead me gently on
From less to greater, till I shall behold,
At last, the face of him, who breaks my bonds,
And sets me free for ever.

KENNEDY.

I am lost
In thought, such contraries to reconcile.
But yesterday you heard your death announced,
To day they grant you this unlooked-for freedom.
They say the chains are loosed to those, on whom
Dawns the bright day of endless liberty.

MARY.

Hark to the bugle! so loudly resounding,
With merry note through wood and plain;
Oh! let me once more, on my nimble steed bounding,
Join the jolly hunting train.
Hark again! Oh! these echoes, so sadly so sweetly,
Call to remembrance the blest days of yore,
When upon the wild heaths of the Highlands, so fleetly,
We chased the foaming mountain boar.

PAULET *(entering)*.

Well, Madam, does this please you? do I then
For once at least deserve your thanks?

MARY.

How Sir?
And is it you, whom I must thank for this?
Are you the person?

PAULET.

Wherefore should I not?
At court I gave your letter to the queen.

MARY.

Did you deliver it? Did you indeed?
And is the freedom, which I now enjoy,
The happy fruit?

PAULET *(significantly)*.

'Tis not the only one.
Expect one still of greater consequence.

MARY.

Expect a greater still! What mean you, Sir?

PAULET.

Heard you the hunter's blast?

MARY *(shrinking back in dismay).*

You terrify me.

PAULET.

The queen is hunting in this neighbourhood,
In a few moments will she hither come.

KENNEDY *(hastening to* MARY, *who stands trembling and ready to sink).*

How is it with you, Madam? you are pale.

PAULET.

What! is it not according to your wish?
Your prayer is granted sooner than you thought.
You, who had always such a ready tongue,
Now summon all your powers of eloquence.
The important time to speak at length arrives.

MARY.

Why did they not beforehand tell me this?
I am not yet prepared for it—not yet—
What I had prayed for, as the greatest boon,
Seems to me now most fearful. Come, my Hannah,
Lead me into the house, that I may try
To summon courage, and collect myself.

PAULET.

Stay, you must here await the interview.
It must, no doubt, cause you an anxious pang
To stand at once in presence of your judge.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY.

MARY.

'Tis not for that. O God! far other thoughts
Oppress my spirit.—Noble Shrewsbury!
[*Grasping his hand.*
You come an angel sent to me from heaven.
—I cannot see her—Let me not be forced
To bear this hated interview.

SHREWSBURY.

O queen,
Collect yourself; call forth your noble spirit,
'Tis the decisive moment of your fate.

MARY.

I've waited, and prepared myself for this,
These many years, turned over in my thoughts
And written in my memory, whate'er
I thought the likeliest words to touch her heart.
Sudden 'tis all forgot and vanished quite.
And at this moment nought lives in my mind
But the revengeful feeling of my wrongs.
'Gainst her my heart is turned in bloody hate,
Good thoughts fly from me, and the fiends of hell
Circle me round, shaking their bloody locks.

SHREWSBURY.

O'ermaster this wild tumult of the blood,
Keep down this bitterness of heart. No good
Can ever come, when hate encounters hate.

Whatever inward struggles it may cost,
You must submit to stern necessity.
The power is in her hands: therefore submit.

MARY.

What! bend to her! that can I never.—

SHREWSBURY.

Do it.
Speak to her with respect and gentleness.
Appeal to her magnanimous heart, nor bear
A haughty carriage to assert your rights,
The hour is unpropitious.

MARY.

Ah! I've prayed
For my destruction, and my prayers are heard,
To bring a curse upon my head. Oh no!
We never should have met nor seen each other.
Alas! no good can ever come of it.
Sooner may fire and water kindly join,
And the lamb kiss the tiger.—I have been
Too hardly used—her cruelties to me
Too grievous—no, we ne'er can meet as friends.

SHREWSBURY.

First see her face to face. I did remark
How much your letter wrought upon her mind.
Her eyes were filled with tears—I know her heart
Is not unfeeling—Have more confidence.
'Tis therefore I have hastened on before,
To give you notice to prepare yourself.

MARY *(seizing his hand).*

Ah! Talbot, you have always been my friend,

Had I but staid under your kindly care!
They have indeed misused me, Shrewsbury!

SHREWSBURY.

Banish it from your mind: and only think
How to receive her with submissiveness.

MARY.

Is Burleigh, my bad angel, in her train?

SHREWSBURY.

No one attends her but the Earl of Liecester.

MARY.

The Earl of Leicester!

SHREWSBURY.

Fear him not. He is
Also your friend. By his persuasion moved
The queen has granted you this interview.

MARY.

Ah! that I knew full well.

SHREWSBURY.

What did you say?

PAULET.

The queen is coming.

[*All retire to the side,* MARY *only remains leaning upon* KENNEDY.

Enter ELIZABETH, EARL of LEICESTER, *and attendants.*

ELIZABETH *(to* LEICESTER.*)*

How call you this domain?

LEICESTER.

Fotheringhay castle.

ELIZABETH *(to* SHREWSBURY*)*.

Send forward our attendants on to London.
The people crowd upon us on the roads.
We will take refuge in this quiet park.

[TALBOT *sends away the attendants. She fixes her eyes upon* MARY, *and goes on speaking to* PAULET.

My people's love is too importunate.
Their signs of joy are quite idolatrous,
As if I were no mortal, but a God.

MARY.

[*Who had leaned all this time, half fainting upon the nurse, now raises herself, and meets the eager look of* ELIZABETH. *She shudders and throws herself back upon the nurse's breast.*

O God in heaven! these looks bespeak no heart.

ELIZABETH.

Who is this lady? [*A general silence.*

LEICESTER.

We are at Fotheringhay,

My liege.

ELIZABETH *(seems surprised and astonished, casting a dark glance at* LEICESTER*)*.

Lord Leicester, who has served me thus?

LEICESTER.

The die is cast, my queen—and now since heaven
Has hither led thy steps, let pity's voice
And magnanimity plead not in vain.

SHREWSBURY.

Most gracious queen, list to our earnest prayers,
And cast thine eye upon the unhappy one,
Who here in anguish stands before thy face.

[MARY *collects herself, and advances towards* ELIZABETH; *she stops shuddering, half-way; her gestures express the most violent inward conflict.*

ELIZABETH.

How now, my Lords? Who told me I should see
A spirit bowed by misery? I behold
A haughty one before me, whom distress
Seems no way to have humbled.

MARY.

Be it so!
Even to this I will submit. Farewell
High thoughts and bootless pride of noble minds!
I will forget my former state and all
My sufferings, I will humbly sue to her,
Who has reduced me to this wretchedness.

[*She turns to the Queen.*

Heaven has decided, sister, for your cause,
And crowned with victory your royal brows,
The Godhead, which exalts you, I adore.

[*She falls down before her.*

But be you, sister, also merciful.
Let me not lie before you thus disgraced,
Stretch out your hand, my royal rights restore,
And raise me from the depth of my distress.

ELIZABETH *(stepping back).*

Madam, your present place beseems you best.
And I do thank the giver of all good,
Who graciously has willed, I should not kneel
Thus at your feet, as now you do at mine.

MARY *(with rising emotion).*

Oh! think how changeful is the state of man!
Think of the Gods who punish lofty pride,
Fear their avenging wrath, 'tis they who bid,
That I should fall thus lowly at your feet.
For these by-standers' sake dishonour not
Yourself in me, profane not with disgrace
The royal blood of Tudor; in my veins
It flows as pure a stream as in your own.
O heavenly mercy! stand not so estranged
And inaccessible, as some tall cliff,
Which the poor shipwrecked mariner in vain
Strives to lay hold of in his agony.
My all, my life, my fate hangs on the force
Of my weak words and tears. Open your heart
That they may find an entrance. When your eyes
Look on me thus so icy, a cold dread
Locks up my heart, the source of tears is staunched,
A shuddering horror chains within my breast
The supplicating words I meant to use.

ELIZABETH *(cold and severe).*

What is it, Madam, that you wish to say?
You sought to speak with me. I will forget
My royal dignity and grievous wrongs,
To undertake the sister's kindly part,

And therefore do I grant this interview.
I yield to generous feeling, and expose
Myself to just reproach, that thus I stoop
So low, for well you know your treacherous arts
Did urge the murderer to attempt my life.

MARY.

Wherewith shall I begin, how shall I place
My words in such array, that they may touch
Your heart, not wound it? O God! give my speech
A melting power, and take from it all sting
Of sharpness; though alas! I cannot plead
My cause, but I must blame you heavily,
And that I would not. You've entreated me
Not justly, for I am a crowned queen,
As you yourself, and kept me prisoner.
I came a suppliant to this land, and you,
Against the rights of hospitality,
Against the law of nations, shut me in
A prison's walls; my servants and my friends,
With barbarous violence, are torn from me.
Then am I given a prey to shameful want,
And basely dragged before a court of law.
Of that no more—let us forget the past,
And let eternal silence veil my wrongs.
See! I will call it a decree of fate,
No blame attaches or to you or me;
A wicked fiend rose from the pit of hell,
To light the flame of hatred in our hearts,
Which in our youth blighted our harmony.
This hatred grew with us, and wicked men

With poisonous breath stirred up the unhappy flame.
Frantic enthusiasts armed the uncalled hand
With sword and dagger—'tis the unhappy fate
Of crowned heads, that when at variance set,
They loose the furies of each private feud,
And rouse the world to arms. No foreign mouth
Is now between us interposed.

[*Approaches her confidently, and with a caressing tone.*

We stand
At length, before each other, face to face.
Now, sister, speak, say how I've done you wrong,
And I will fully satisfy your mind.
Ah! had you then vouchsafed to see my face,
When I so earnestly intreated you,
It ne'er had come to this, ne'er had this place,
This dismal ominous place, where now we meet,
Witnessed this sad and luckless interview.

ELIZABETH.

My happy stars preserved me, and forbade,
That I should take an adder to my breast.
—Blame not your fate, but blame your own black heart,
And the untamed ambition of your house.
Nought had arisen our concord to disturb,
When your imperious uncle, the proud priest,
Who with a daring hand attacks all crowns,
Against me denounced war, and fooled your mind
To take the arms of England, to assume
My royal title, and in mortal strife

To meet me in the lists. He tried to arm
Against me every power, the tongue of priests,
The sword of nations, and the dreadful hand
Of the enthusiast crazed with pious dreams.
Even here, in mine own realm, in profound peace,
He tried to rouse rebellion from her den.
But God is on my side, the haughty priest
Is forced to quit the field—the blow was aimed
Against my head, but yours is doomed to fall.

MARY.

I stand before the Almighty. Let me hope
You will not use your power so bloodily.

ELIZABETH.

Whose hand shall stay me? Your good uncle taught
A lesson to the kings of all the world,
How they should make peace with their enemies.
Mine be the school of Saint Bartholomew!
What are to me the claims of kindred blood,
The law of nations? Every moral tie
Your church dissolves, it consecrates the breach
Of dutiful allegiance, and it whets
The assassin's knife against anointed kings.
I only practise what your churchmen teach.
And now suppose, that I should generously
Open your prison doors, and set you free,
Under what lock could I secure your faith,
Not to be opened by St. Peter's keys?
My safety lies in force, no covenant
Avails against the treacherous viper brood.

MARY.

'Tis but the dark suspicion of your mind.
You've always looked upon me as a foe
And stranger; had you openly proclaimed
My lawful rights, as heiress to your throne,
The bonds of love and gratitude had knit
My heart to yours for ever.

ELIZABETH.

Madam, your friends
Reside abroad, the Popedom is your home,
The monk your brother—I proclaim your rights
As heiress to my crown! Oh! treacherous snare!
That, while I live, you might seduce my people,
And, like a sly Armida, in your nets
Entangle all our noble English youth,
Smit with the magic of your witching charms;
That all should turn them towards the rising sun,
Whilst I remained neglected.

MARY.

Reign in peace.
All claims on England freely I resign.
Alas! I feel my soaring spirit tamed,
Greatness no longer charms. Your end is gained,
I now am but the shadow of myself.
Grief and a prison's hardships have subdued
My once proud soul—your power has done its worst.
You have destroyed me in my youthful bloom.
—Now, sister, let my tortures have an end.
Speak but the word, why you have hither come,
For I will ne'er believe it was your aim

To taunt your victim with inhuman scoffs.
Speak but the word. Say to me, "you are free,
"Mary, you now have felt my power, henceforth,
"Learn to respect my magnanimity."
Say to me this, and I will, as a gift,
My life, my freedom at your hand receive.
One word—and all's forgot. My anxious ear
Waits for that word. Oh! let me hear it quick.
Ill luck betide you, if you end not with it!
If you do leave me, sister, in despair,
Nor like some glorious godhead, whisper peace
And consolation to my wretched soul,
Not for this island's wealth, not for the wealth
Of all the lands, which the wide ocean holds,
Would I for yours exchange my present lot.

ELIZABETH.

Do you at last confess yourself subdued?
Are all your wiles exhausted? Not one more
Assassin on his road? Will your brave knights
Risk no more desperate ventures for your sake?
—Yes, Mary Stuart, all your hopes are o'er.
No longer can you lead men's hearts astray.
The world has other cares. No man would wish
To lead you for the fourth time to the altar;
You kill your wooers, as you did your husbands.

MARY *(flying out).*

Hah! sister, sister! grant me patience, heaven!

ELIZABETH *(looks at her a long time with an expression of proud contempt).*

Leicester! are these the charms, which no man's eye

With safety can behold, in whose compare
All other female beauties stand eclipsed?
Truly, such fame is cheaply won! to make
Our charms the common theme of all men's praise,
'Tis but to make those charms common to all.

MARY.

This is too much!

ELIZABETH *(laughing sarcastically).*

You now shew your true face,
Till now we only saw the outward mask.

MARY *(glowing with anger, yet with a noble dignity).*

My sins were human, and the faults of youth;
I was seduced by power, I ne'er concealed
My actions in the veil of mystery.
With royal frankness I disdained the cloak
Of falsehood and hypocrisy. The world
Has seen the worst of me, and I with truth
Can say, that I am better than I seem.
Alas for you, when all your secret deeds
Before the world stand openly exposed,
Stript of the specious mantle, which you throw
Over the lewd scenes of your stolen lusts.
Your mother left you not the inheritance
Of modesty, we know what virtues brought
The head of Anna Boleyne to the block.

SHREWSBURY *(stepping between the two queens).*

O God, in heaven! and is it come to this!
Is this submission, Mary Stuart, this—

MARY.

Submission! I have borne what man could bear!

Farewell, lamb-hearted meekness, back to heaven
Enduring patience, burst at length thy bonds,
Come from thy cavern, long imprisoned hate,
And thou, that to the angry basilisk
Didst give the murderous glance, lay on my tongue
The poisoned arrow.—

SHREWSBURY.

She's beside herself!
Forgive the furious madness of her speech.

[ELIZABETH *speechless with anger, casts enraged looks at* MARY.

LEICESTER *(in the most violent agitation, trying to lead* ELIZABETH *away).*

Attend not to her raving words! Away!
From this disastrous place, Away!

MARY.

The throne
Of England is profaned by bastardy!
The noble-hearted race of England's sons
By a false juggling woman is abused.
—If right prevailed, before me you would lie
Now in the dust, for I am England's queen.

[ELIZABETH *hastily quits the stage, the Lords follow her in the greatest consternation.*

KENNEDY.

What have you done! Ah me! she goes in rage!
All is now over, all our hopes are gone!

MARY *(still quite beside herself).*

She goes in rage! She bears death in her heart!

[*Falling on* KENNEDY'S *neck.*

Oh! I'm so happy, Hannah, now at last,
After long years of suffering and contempt,
One moment of triumphant great revenge!
My heart is lightened of a mountain's load,
I plunged the dagger in her hated breast.

KENNEDY.

Ah me! what madness has possessed your mind.
You have offended her beyond forgiveness.
She bears the lightning in her royal hand,
Before her lover you've insulted her.

MARY.

Yes, before Leicester I've insulted her,
He saw it, and bore witness to the blow,
Which brought her towering pride down to the ground.
His presence gave me courage for the fight.

Enter MORTIMER.

KENNEDY.

O Sir! what sad effects—

MORTIMER.

I heard it all.

[*Gives the nurse a sign to repair to her post, and comes nearer.*

Yes thou hast triumphed, thou didst tread her down
Even to the very dust, thou wast the queen,
And she the trembling caitiff. I am charmed
With thy heroic spirit, and adore

The heightened beauties, which thy form displays;
My sense is dazzled with its heavenly beams.

MARY.

Spoke you with Leicester? did you give to him
My letter and my present? O Sir, speak!

MORTIMER *(gazing on her with eager looks).*

How did the noble glow of royal scorn
Blaze in thy features, and enhance thy charms!
All earth besides contains not such a form.

MARY.

Sir, I beseech you, satisfy my doubts.
What says my Lord? what room is left for hope?

MORTIMER.

Who! he! Oh, he's a paltry trembling wretch!
Hope nought from him, dismiss him from your thoughts.

MARY.

How say you, Sir?

MORTIMER.

What! shall he bear you hence?
He dares not for his life! and if he dares,
First must he try my arm in mortal fight.

MARY.

You have not, Sir, conveyed my letter to him!
Then farewell hope!

MORTIMER.

The coward loves his life.
He, who would bear you hence, and call you his,
Must dare to meet death in his ghastliest shape.

MARY.

Will he do nothing for me?

MORTIMER.

Speak not of him.
What can he do, and what need we his help?
I will preserve you, I alone!

MARY.

Alas!
What can you do?

MORTIMER.

No more deceive yourself,
Think not your case is now as yesterday.
Seeing that your interview has ta'en this turn,
And the queen went in wrath away, all hope
Is lost; the day of grace and pardon past.
Boldness must now decide and venturous deeds;
You must be free, before to morrow's dawn.

MARY.

How say you, Sir? this night! impossible!

MORTIMER.

Hear what we have resolved on. I convened
My noble comrades in a private chapel,
Where each one to a priest confessed himself,
Who from all sins absolved us, both the past,
And those which we in future might commit.
Thereon we took the holy sacrament,
And now are ready for the great emprize.

MARY.

Oh! what a fearful preparation!

MORTIMER.

To night the castle we surprise. The keys
Are in my hands. The unsuspecting guards
We mean to slay, then tear thee from thy chamber
By open force, and that no tongue remain
To tell the deed, must every living soul
Under our hands expire.

MARY.

And Drury, Paulet,
My jailors? sooner their last drop of blood—

MORTIMER.

Beneath my dagger's point they fall the first.

MARY.

And must your uncle too? your second father—

MORTIMER.

Under my hand he dies.

MARY.

Oh! bloody deed!

MORTIMER.

My crimes beforehand are absolved. I can
And will commit the worst.

MARY.

Oh! dreadful! dreadful!

MORTIMER.

And were it needful even to stab the queen,
I've sworn upon the holy host to do it.

MARY.

No, Mortimer, ere for me so much blood—

MORTIMER.

What are the lives of all compared with thee

And my great love? Let the whole earth be torn
From its foundations, let a second flood
All living creatures whelm beneath its waves,
I reck not! Ere I do forsake my love,
The sun shall stay his everlasting course.

MARY *(stepping back).*

Oh! heavens! what words are these, and what wild looks!
You scare me with that furious glance.

MORTIMER *(with unsteady looks, and expressive of tranquil madness).*

This life
Is but a moment, death itself no more!
Let them to Tyburn drag me, limb from limb
My mangled body with hot pincers tear,
[*Approaching eagerly to her, with outspread arms.*
Could I but so infold thee in these arms,
My dearest, best beloved.—

MARY *(retreating).*

Rash man, forbear.

MORTIMER.

And on this breast and lips, glowing with love—

MARY.

For mercy's sake, Sir! let me go within.

MORTIMER.

That man's a madman, who lets slip his hold
Of happiness, which heaven gives to his grasp.
Yes, I will save thee, loveliest, though it cost

Ten thousand lives, but by the living God
I swear, I also will possess thy charms.

MARY.

Will no kind angel save me from this man!
Oh! dreadful fortune! must my sufferings know
No respite, each succeeding moment brings
New scenes of horror. Was I only born
To stir up rage and madness? Love and hate
Are leagued together to destroy my peace.

MORTIMER.

Yes, glowing as their hatred is my love.
They would behead thee, with the barbarous axe
Divide in twain this beauteous ivory neck.
Oh give then to the God of soft delights,
What thou must offer to their bloody hate.
Bless with these charms, no longer now thine own,
The happy lover. This soft golden hair,
These graceful ringlets soon must fall beneath
The blow of the stern headsman. Use them now
To twine around thy fond adoring slave.

MARY.

Oh, Sir! compel me not to hear such words.
If not my royal dignity, at least
My woes and sufferings, should command respect.

MORTIMER.

The royal crown is fallen from off thy brows,
Nought hast thou left of earthly majesty.
Nought now is left thee, save thy touching form,
The godlike power of beauty. This it is,

Which gives me courage to attempt and dare,
To brave the scaffold and the headsman's axe.

MARY.

Oh, who shall save me from this madman's power!

MORTIMER.

Such high deserts may claim a high reward.
Why does the brave man shed his blood? To live
Is man's first wish. He is a very fool,
Who flings his life away. First I will take
My share of transport on this lovely breast.

[*He presses her violently to his bosom.*

MARY.

Oh, must I call for help against the man,
Who was my friend!

MORTIMER.

Thy bosom is not cold,
The world does not reproach thee for that fault,
The warm intreaties of a lover's lips
Can touch thy heart; the soft transporting bliss
Thou didst bestow upon thy Rizzio,
And Bothwell did by force possess thy charms.

MARY.

Audacious man!

MORTIMER.

He was thy tyrant lord,
He made thee tremble, though thou lovedst him so.
If fear alone can win thee, by the powers
Of hell beneath—

MARY.

Oh leave me, are you mad?

MORTIMER.

I too can make thee tremble.

KENNEDY *(rushing hastily in).*

They are here.—

They come—The garden's filled with armed men.

MORTIMER *(starting and seizing his sword).*

I will defend thee—

MARY.

Hannah, save me from him.

To what Saint shall I turn me? Violence

Here threatens me, and yonder murderous hands.

[*She hastens to the house,* KENNEDY *follows.*

PAULET *and* DRURY *rush in, in the greatest consternation. Attendants hurry over the stage.*

PAULET.

Make fast the gates—and draw the bridges up.

MORTIMER.

Why this alarm, good uncle?

PAULET.

Where's the murderess?

Down with her, down into the deepest dungeon.

MORTIMER.

Say what has happened, Sir!

PAULET.

The queen! the queen!

Oh, cursed hands! infernal treachery!

MORTIMER.

The queen! what queen mean you?

PAULET.

The Queen of England.
She has been murdered on the London road.
[*Hastens into the house.*

MORTIMER.

Has madness seized me? Came not one just now,
Who cried aloud, "the Queen of England's murdered!"
Oh, no. I did but dream. My feverish sense
Presents before my heat-oppressed brain,
What long has filled my mind with fearful thoughts.
Who comes? Okelly? Why these ghastly looks?

OKELLY *(rushing in).*

Fly, Mortimer! Oh, fly—all, all is lost!

MORTIMER.

What's lost?

OKELLY.

Ask me no questions, only think
Of speediest flight.

MORTIMER.

What's happened?

OKELLY.

Sauvage struck
The blow, unhappy madman.

MORTIMER.

Then 'tis true.

OKELLY.

Alas, too true! Oh, save yourself!

MORTIMER.

She's dead!
And Mary Stuart mounts the English throne.

OKELLY.

She's dead! who told you that?

MORTIMER.

Yourself.

OKELLY.

She lives,
And I and you, and all of us are lost.

MORTIMER.

She lives!

OKELLY.

The erring blow fell on her cloak,
And Shrewsbury disarmed the murderer.

MORTIMER.

She lives!

OKELLY.

She lives, alas! to crush us all.
Come, they surround the park.

MORTIMER.

Who was't that struck
The frantic blow?

OKELLY.

The Barnabite you saw,
So deeply sunk in thought within the chapel,
As the Monk pointed out the anathema,
Which the Pope's bull had hurled against the queen,
He wished to seize the shortest path, and free,
With one bold stroke, the Church of God, and gain
The crown of martyrdom. The bold design
He trusted to the priest alone, and struck
Upon the London road the fatal blow.

MORTIMER *(after a long silence)*.

Alas! a fearful fate hangs o'er thy head,
Unhappy queen! Thou'rt doomed beyond all hope.
Thy guardian angel has prepared thy fall.

OKELLY.

Say, whither will you bend your flight? I go
To hide me in the forests of the north.

MORTIMER.

Fly, and may heaven direct your steps. I stay
Behind. Once more I'll try her life to save,
Or make my bed on her untimely grave.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Antichamber.

Enter COUNT AUBESPINE, KENT, *and* LEICESTER.

AUBESPINE.

How fares it with her majesty? My Lords,
I freeze with horror at this dreadful news.
How happened it? How could so foul an act
Be done amidst this generous loyal people?

LEICESTER.

No English hand committed the foul deed,
The assassin was a subject of your king,
A Frenchman.

AUBESPINE.

Sure some lunatic.

KENT.

A papist,
Count Aubespine.

Enter BURLEIGH *in conversation with* DAVISON.

BURLEIGH.

Prepare without delay
The death warrant, and stamp it with the seal.

When it is ready, bring it to the queen
For signature. Go, let no time be lost.

DAVISON.

It shall be done.

AUBESPINE *(turning to* BURLEIGH*)*.

My Lord, my faithful heart
Partakes the general joy of Englishmen.
Praise be to God, who from the royal head
Has turned the murderous dagger.

BURLEIGH.

Praise to him,
Who brings to shame the malice of our foes.

AUBESPINE.

May heaven's eternal vengeance overtake
The doer of this most accursed deed.

BURLEIGH.

The doer and the infamous deviser.

AUBESPINE *(to* KENT*)*.

Good, my Lord Marshal, may it please your lordship
To bring me to the presence of the queen,
That I with duteous loyalty may lay
(For so my royal master would command),
His warm congratulations at her feet.

BURLEIGH.

Give not yourself this trouble, Count.

AUBESPINE.

I know
My duty, good my Lord.

BURLEIGH.

Your duty is
To quit this island instantly.

AUBESPINE.

How! what!

BURLEIGH.

The sacred office of Ambassador
To day protects you, Count, to morrow not.

AUBESPINE.

What crime have I committed?

BURLEIGH.

Should I once
Pronounce it, there's no room for pardon left.

AUBESPINE.

I hope, my Lord, my sacred character—

BURLEIGH.

Cannot protect—a traitor.

LEICESTER *and* KENT.

Hah!

AUBESPINE.

My Lord,
Consider well—

BURLEIGH.

A passport signed by you
Was found upon the assassin.

KENT.

Gracious heaven!
Is't possible?

AUBESPINE.

I sign so many passports—
I cannot dive into the hearts of men.

BURLEIGH.

The murderer in your house confessed himself.

AUBESPINE.

My house is open.

BURLEIGH.

To the foes of England.

AUBESPINE.

I do demand enquiry.

BURLEIGH.

Fear it, Count.

AUBESPINE.

My royal master will resent the affront
You offer in my person, and dissolve
The marriage treaty.

BURLEIGH.

That my gracious queen
Already has dissolved, England will not
With France in marriage now unite herself.
My Lord of Kent, you'll undertake the charge
To see Count Aubespine safely embarked.
The furious populace has stormed his house,
Where was discovered a whole arsenal
Of arms, and if he shew himself, their rage
Will tear him piecemeal. Hide him from their sight,
Till they disperse; you answer for his life.

AUBESPINE.

I go—this kingdom willingly I quit,
Which treads the law of nations under foot,
And sports with treaties; but for this my king
Will make a bloody reckoning.

BURLEIGH.

Be it so.

[*Exit* AUBESPINE, KENT, *and* DAVISON.

LEICESTER.

Thus you yourself dissolve the solemn league,
Which, with uncalled for zeal, you sought to form.
You have but little claim to England's thanks,
My Lord, this trouble you might well have spared.

BURLEIGH.

My aims were pure. Heaven otherwise decreed.
'Tis well for him, whose conscience has nought worse
To testify against him.

LEICESTER.

Well we know
Your deep mysterious looks, when on the hunt
For treason, these are Cecil's golden days.
A monstrous crime has happened in the land,
And darkness shrouds the abettors. Now we'll see
A court of inquisition, where each word,
Each look, will be arraigned, our very thoughts
Themselves be called to answer. There you are
The mighty man, the Atlas of the state,
To bear the weight of England on your shoulders.

BURLEIGH.

My Lord, I bow to your superior claims.

For such a triumph as your eloquence
Has won, ne'er graced my humbler powers of speech.

LEICESTER.

I pray you, what means this?

BURLEIGH.

You were the man,
Who could, unknown to me, entice the queen
To visit Fotheringhay.

LEICESTER.

Unknown to you!
When did my deeds, my Lord, shrink from your eye?

BURLEIGH.

You did not then to Fotheringhay conduct
The queen. Oh, no! perhaps it was the queen,
Who in her train thither conducted you.

LEICESTER.

I understand you not.

BURLEIGH.

A noble part
Truly, you taught her Majesty to play!
A glorious triumph, which you there prepared
For her confiding goodness! Gracious queen!
That they should so abuse and vilify
Thy tender heart, and with unsparing hand
Give thee a prey to ridicule and scorn!
—This was the fit of generous clemency,
Which suddenly o'ertook you in the council!
For this you would persuade us to believe
The Stuart so contemptible a foe,
That it would scarce be worth our while to stain

Our hands with blood so mean. Glorious device!
So finely sharp and pointed! but, alas!
The point too finely sharp broke in your hands.

LEICESTER.

Base man! this instant follow me. The queen
Shall on her throne decide our difference.

BURLEIGH.

There will you find me—and take heed, my Lord,
That there your eloquence desert you not.

[*Exit* BURLEIGH.

LEICESTER.

My plans are all seen through. Curse on this wretch,
This luckless wretch, who came across my path.
Ah me! if he has proofs, if the queen finds
A secret correspondence has ta'en place
'Twixt me and Mary—heavens! how low and mean
Must I appear! how treacherous and false
The counsel which I gave, the pains I took,
To draw her on to visit Fotheringhay.
She finds that I've betrayed her cruelly,
In bitter sport, to her detested foe;
This is a crime too deep to be forgiven.
All will appear purposely so contrived,—
The bitter ending of the interview,
Her rival's scornful triumph, even the blow
Aimed by the assassin's hand, which intervened,
An unexpected dire fatality,
All this will seem my doing! I can see
No way to save myself. Hah! who comes here?

MORTIMER *(entering in violent agitation, and looking timidly around).*

Lord Leicester, is it you? are we alone?

LEICESTER.

Unhappy man! away! What seek you here?

MORTIMER.

They are upon the scent, they dog us both.
Look to yourself.

LEICESTER.

Away! away!

MORTIMER.

They know
The secret meeting held at Aubespine's.

LEICESTER.

Why this to me?

MORTIMER.

And that the murderer
Was of the party.—

LEICESTER.

That is your affair.
Audacious wretch! how dare you undertake
To join my name in these your bloody deeds?
Defend your horrid crimes as best you can.

MORTIMER.

Will you not hear me?

LEICESTER.

Down to lowest hell!
Why, like a wicked dæmon, will you cling
Thus to my heels? Away! I know you not.
I hold no fellowship with murderers.

MORTIMER.

You will not hear. I came, my Lord, to warn you,
Your footsteps too have been detected.

LEICESTER.

Hah!

MORTIMER.

The Lord High Treasurer came to Fotheringhay,
Direct, just as the luckless deed was done.
The chambers of the queen were strictly searched,
They found there—

LEICESTER.

What!

MORTIMER.

A letter just begun
From Mary to yourself.

LEICESTER.

Unhappy woman!

MORTIMER.

In which she calls on you to keep your word,
Renews the promise of her heart and hand,
Reminds you of her portrait—

LEICESTER.

Death and hell!

MORTIMER.

Lord Burleigh has the letter.

LEICESTER.

I am lost!

MORTIMER.

Seize on the moment and prevent his schemes.
Preserve yourself and her, swear a bold oath,

Think of excuses, and avert the worst.
I can no more. My comrades are dispersed,
Our league is burst asunder. I go hence
To Scotland, new associates to collect.
'Tis now your turn, my Lord; try what your weight,
Try what assurance can effect—

LEICESTER *(stands still, then suddenly recollecting).*

I will.
Who waits without? Guards, seize this traitorous wretch,
And keep him close. A most abhorred plot
Has just been brought to light—I'll to the queen,
And to her ear the frightful news convey.

[*Exit* LEICESTER.

MORTIMER.

[*At first stands stupified with astonishment, but soon recovers himself, and looks after* LEICESTER *with looks of the most profound contempt.*

Hah! base apostate! I deserve it all.
Why did I trust this paltry cozener.
Over my head with haughty step he strides,
And builds his bridge of safety on my fall.
—So save thyself: silence shall close my lips.
I will not in my ruin pull thee down,
Not even in death shalt thou my comrade be.
Of such a wretch life is the only good.

[*To the Officer, who steps forward to seize him.*

What wouldst thou, hireling slave of tyranny?

I laugh to scorn thy efforts—I am free!

[*Drawing a dagger.*

OFFICER.

See, he is armed! Wrest we the dagger from him.

[*They press upon him, he keeps them off.*

MORTIMER.

And as my latest moments ebb, my heart
And loosened tongue shall freely vent themselves.
Curses light on you, traitors, who forsake
Alike your God, and your true lawful queen!
Who, from the earthly Mary, turned away,
As from the heavenly, sell yourselves to serve
This bastard queen.

OFFICER.

Hear you his blasphemy?
Rush forward, seize the villain, down with him.

MORTIMER.

My best-beloved! thy life I could not save,
Then learn from my example how to die.
Holy Maria! raise me from the grave,
And take me to thy blissful realms on high.

[*He stabs himself with the dagger, and falls into the arms of the guard. The curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

Queen's Chambers.

ELIZABETH, *with a letter in her hand; and* BURLEIGH.

ELIZABETH.

To take me thither! and to mock me thus!
Traitorous wretch! to lead our royal self
To grace the triumph of his paramour!
Never was woman, Burleigh, so betrayed.

BURLEIGH.

I cannot yet conceive, what magic arts,
What potent spells gave him the wonderous power,
Thus to surprise the prudence of my queen.

ELIZABETH.

Oh! I shall die with shame. How must he scorn
My weakness! when I thought to humble her,
I was myself the object of her scoffs.

BURLEIGH.

Thou seest how true and faithful my advice.

ELIZABETH.

Oh! I do much repent me, that mine ear
Was deaf to your wise counsels. Yet how know
His heart was treacherous? In the passionate oaths
Of love and duty, why suspect a snare?
Whom then can I confide in, if he's false?
He, whom I've raised to highest dignities,

Who ever held the first place in my heart,
And who, by my indulgence, at this court
Has always seemed the master and the king.

BURLEIGH.

Yet at that moment he betrayed his queen
To this perfidious Scots woman.

ELIZABETH.

Her blood
Shall pay the forfeit. Is the death warrant
Prepared?

BURLEIGH.

It is, my liege, by your command.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, she shall die; his eyes shall see her fall.
Then shall he fall himself. I've rooted him
Out of my heart, my love is driven away,
And vengeance fills its place. High as he stood,
So low and ignominious be his fall.
Be he to all the world a monument
Of my severity, as once he was
A cause and instance of my yielding weakness.
Let him be straightway carried to the Tower,
And peers be named to try him, he shall feel,
In its full weight, the vengeance of the law.

BURLEIGH.

He'll strive to move your pity, and to clear—

ELIZABETH.

How can he clear himself? Does he not stand
Convicted by the letter? Oh! his crime
Is clear as day.

BURLEIGH.

But thou art good and kind,
When thou shalt see him, his accustomed arts—

ELIZABETH.

I'll never see him more! no never! never!
Has the command been issued, when he comes,
To shut the doors against him?

BURLEIGH.

'Tis so ordered.

A PAGE *(entering)*.

The Earl of Leicester waits.

ELIZABETH.

Detested man!
I will not see him. Tell him 'tis our will,
That he depart.

PAGE.

I dare not tell him so.
Nor would he give me credence.

ELIZABETH.

Is it so?
Have I then raised him to this dangerous height,
That my own servants fear him more than me!

BURLEIGH *(to the Page)*.

The queen forbids him entrance. Tell him so.

[*The Page slowly retires.*

ELIZABETH.

Yet were it possible—should he prove himself
Not guilty after all—may not this be
A cunning snare laid by the treacherous foe,
To sow dissension 'twixt my friend and me?

Oh, she is practised in these wily arts!
Perchance she wrote this letter, to awake
Suspicion in my breast, to ruin him
Whom she detests—

BURLEIGH.

Weigh in your mind, my liege—

Enter LEICESTER, *bursting open the door.*

LEICESTER.

I fain would see this bold bad man, who dares
Thus to debar me from my gracious queen.

ELIZABETH.

Hah! shameless man!

LEICESTER.

To turn me from the door!
If to a Burleigh she's accessible,
So must she be to me.

BURLEIGH.

You're bold, my Lord,
Thus against leave rudely to force the door!

LEICESTER.

You're bold, my Lord, to issue orders here.
Leave truly! there is no man at this court,
Whose leave the Earl of Liecester needs to ask,
Or whose forbiddance shall o'erawe his spirit.
[*Submissively approaching* ELIZABETH.
'Tis from my gracious queen's own mouth, that I—

ELIZABETH *(without looking at him).*

Out of my sight, intrusive visitor!

LEICESTER.

I do not hear my good Elizabeth,
But the Lord Burleigh, my sworn enemy,
In these unkind expressions. I appeal
To my Elizabeth—thou gavest an ear
To him, then hear me also—

ELIZABETH.

Speak, vile man!
Make your crime greater—by denying it.

LEICESTER.

First let this troublesome by-stander quit
The presence. Go, my Lord. I've that to say
To my most gracious mistress, which needs not
Your hearing. Go!

ELIZABETH.

Stay, Burleigh, I command yc

LEICESTER.

Why should a third intrude 'twixt thee and me?
I wish to speak with my adored queen.
I do insist upon the sacred rights,
Which to my place belong: and I demand,
That he do now withdraw.

ELIZABETH.

Such sauciness
Of speech becomes you!

LEICESTER.

Yes, it does become me.
I am the happy man, to whom my queen
Has given her kindly preference, and am raised
To such a princely height, that I look down

On him and all mankind. Thy heart bestowed
This proud distinction, and by heaven I swear
What love has given me, that will I maintain
At my life's peril. Let this Lord depart.
Grant me two moments to explain myself,
And I will fully satisfy my queen.

ELIZABETH.

You hope in vain to blind me with your prate.

LEICESTER.

A cunning talker might with prating blind.
But to thy heart I do address myself.
And that, which trusting to thy favouring love,
I dared to do, before thy heart alone
Will I defend. I know no other court
Above me, but thy kind sympathy.

ELIZABETH.

O shameless wretch! 'tis this which most condemns thee.
Shew him the letter.

BURLEIGH.

Here it is, my Liege.

LEICESTER *(runs over the letter with composure).*

This is the Stuart's hand.

ELIZABETH.

Read and be dumb!

LEICESTER *(after having read the letter, without emotion).*

Appearance is against me, yet I hope
I shall not be condemned on that alone.

ELIZABETH.

Can you deny, that you have secretly
Had dealings with the Stuart, that she sent you
Her portrait, that you flattered her with hopes
Of freeing her from prison.

LEICESTER.

I might with ease,
If I were conscious of the guilt, refuse
To plead upon the witness of a foe.
But as my mind is guiltless, I avow
Her letter speaks the truth.

ELIZABETH.

Unhappy wretch!
'Tis true then.

BURLEIGH.

His own mouth avows the crime.

ELIZABETH.

Hence, traitor, from my sight! hence to the Tower!

LEICESTER.

I am no traitor. I confess my fault,
That I concealed this matter from thine ear.
But my designs were pure, by this I meant
To search out and confound her treacherous arts.

ELIZABETH.

Wretched evasion!

BURLEIGH.

Do you think, my Lord—

LEICESTER.

Full well I know, I've played a dangerous game,
Which none but Leicester at this court would risk.

My hatred to the Stuart is well known.
The rank I hold, the boundless confidence
My queen has deigned to grant me, must dispel
All doubt of my good faith and loyalty.
Well may the man, who by thy favouring smiles
Is raised above his peers, pursue a course
Of bolder daring, when he means to serve
His gracious Sovereign.

BURLEIGH.

Why, my worthy Lord,
Your purpose being so good, did you conceal it?

LEICESTER.

My Lord you always talk before you act,
And trumpet your own deeds. That is your mode.
Mine is to act and then to talk.

BURLEIGH.

You talk
Just now, because you can't do otherwise.

LEICESTER.

You fancy now, you've done a wonderous feat,
Saved the queen's life, unmasked the traitor's aims;
Nothing escapes these penetrating eyes,
You know all—is't not so? poor vapourer!
Spite of your art in tracking game, this day
The Stuart, but for me, had been at large.

BURLEIGH.

But for you—

LEICESTER.

But for me, my Lord. The queen
Trusted that Mortimer, her inmost thoughts

She opened to him, nay she went so far,
Against the Stuart did she charge him with
A bloody purpose, which his uncle Paulet
Before refused with horror. Is't not so?

[*The Queen and* BURLEIGH *look at each other in amaze.*

BURLEIGH.

How came you to know that?

LEICESTER.

Say, is't not true?
And now, my Lord, where were your thousand eyes,
Not to find out that Mortimer was false?
A furious papist, and the Guises' tool,
A creature of the Stuart, and a bold
Hot-brained enthusiast, who had hither come
To free the Stuart, and our gracious queen
To murder—

ELIZABETH.

How! this Mortimer!

LEICESTER.

'Twas he,
Through whom the Stuart sought to win my aid.
And thus was formed the acquaintance. It was planned,
This very day to tear her from her prison:
From his own lips I learned it even now:
I caused the guards to seize him, in despair
To see his hopes destroyed, himself unmasked,
He plunged a dagger in his breast.

ELIZABETH.

Ah me!
How I have been deceived! this Mortimer!

BURLEIGH.

And happened this just now? after I left you?

LEICESTER.

For my own sake, I must lament the deed,
Which brought him to this end. If he had lived,
His witness would have fully cleared my fame,
And left no room for doubt. 'Twas for this cause,
I gave him up to justice. The most strict
And scrupulous enquiry would have shewn
To all the world my perfect innocence.

BURLEIGH.

He killed himself, you say? himself? or did
You kill him?

LEICESTER.

Base suspicion! Hear the guard
To whom I gave him into custody.

[*He goes to the door and calls out; the Officer of the guard comes in.*

Give to her Majesty a just account
How Mortimer expired.

OFFICER.

I was on guard
In the anti-chamber, when Lord Leicester oped
The door in haste, and bade me seize the knight,
Whom he denounced a traitor. Thereupon
We saw him storm with fury, then he drew
His dagger, and 'midst horrid blasphemies,

And violent imprecations 'gainst the queen,
Before we could prevent him, plunged the steel
Into his heart, and sank a lifeless corse.

LEICESTER.

'Tis well. You may retire. Her Majesty
Has heard enough.

ELIZABETH.

Oh! what a deep abyss.
Of foul enormities!

LEICESTER.

Who was it then
That saved thee? Was it this most sapient Lord?
Did he perceive the dangers round thee spread?
Did he avert them? No, it was thy Leicester,
Thy guardian angel.

BURLEIGH.

Earl, this Mortimer
Died in good time for you.

ELIZABETH.

I'm lost in doubt.
What I should say I know not. I believe you,
And yet believe you not. I think you false,
And think you faithful. Oh! the hateful one,
Who causes all this mischief.

LEICESTER.

She must die.
I now vote for her death. I formerly
Advised thee to suspend the fatal blow,
Till some new arm were raised in her behalf.

That hour is come. And now I strongly urge
Without delay the sentence be enforced.

BURLEIGH.

Do you advise it? you?

LEICESTER.

Loath though I am
To urge a measure that may seem so harsh,
I see and feel, the safety of the queen
Demands this bloody offering, and propose
The order be drawn up without delay.

BURLEIGH.

Since my Lord Leicester shews such earnest zeal,
I would advise that to his hands be given
To execute the sentence of the court.

LEICESTER.

To mine?

BURLEIGH.

To yours. Thus will you best dispel
Suspicion from men's minds, if you yourself,
Who stand accused of loving her, command
The headsman to inflict the fatal blow.

ELIZABETH *(fixing* LEICESTER *with her eyes)*.

My Lord advises well. So shall it be.

LEICESTER.

The splendour of my station well might plead
Excuse, to free me from the dismal task,
Which you assign me, and in every sense
It suits a Burleigh better far than me.
He whom the queen has chosen for her friend,
Should ne'er become the instrument of woe.

But yet to prove how zealously my heart
Is bent to serve my sovereign, I will wave
The privilege of rank, and undertake
This awful duty which my soul abhors.

ELIZABETH.

Lord Burleigh shall partake it.

[*To the latter.*

Take good heed
To have the warrant instantly prepared.

[BURLEIGH *goes out; a tumult is heard without.*

Enter the EARL OF KENT.

ELIZABETH.

My Lord of Kent, whence this tumultuous noise
I hear without? The city seems disturbed.

KENT.

My liege, it is the people, who beset
The palace, and impatiently demand
To see thyself.

ELIZABETH.

What is my people's will?

KENT.

The alarm has spread through London, that thy life
Has been endangered, that a murderous band,
Sent by the Pope against thee, roam abroad,
And that the Catholic party have conspired
To free the Stuart, and proclaim her queen.
The populace give credence to the news,
And storm with fury. Nought can calm their rage,

But to deliver this day to the axe
The Stuart's head.

ELIZABETH.

What! must I be compelled?

KENT.

They are determined not to yield the point,
Nor quit the palace till thou hast conceded.

Enter BURLEIGH, *and* DAVISON *with a paper.*

ELIZABETH.

What bring you, Davison?

DAVISON.

'Twas thy command,
My gracious liege—

ELIZABETH.

What is it?

[*As she is going to take it, she shudders and shrinks back.*

Heavens!

BURLEIGH.

Obey
The people's voice; it is the voice of God.

ELIZABETH *(irresolute, and struggling with herself).*

My Lords! who can assure me, that I hear
The voice of my whole people and the world.
Ah! I do fear me, if I should obey
The wishes of the multitude, a voice
Far different will be heard: even those, who now

With violent instance urge me to the deed,
Will load me with reproaches when 'tis done.

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY, *in great emotion.*

SHREWSBURY.

My liege, they wish to take thee by surprise,
Be firm, be steady—
[*Seeing* DAVISON *with a paper.*
Is't already done?
Is it indeed? For in his hand I see
An ominous paper, which should not now meet
The royal eye.

ELIZABETH.

My noble Shrewsbury!
I am constrained.

SHREWSBURY.

Who can constrain thee? Thou
Art sovereign mistress, it behoves thee here
To shew thy Majesty. Command this mob
To cease their bawling clamours, nor thus dare
To put constraint upon thy royal will,
And govern thy decisions. Wild affright
And madness have possessed the people's minds.
Sorely provoked, thou art not yet thyself.
And being a mortal, in this frame of mind
Thou should'st not now pass sentence on thy foe.

BURLEIGH *(eagerly).*

The sentence! that long since has been pronounced;
It only now remains to execute.

KENT *(who at* SHREWSBURY'S *entrance had gone out, returns).*

The tumult gains apace, no means avail
To tame the people's fury.

ELIZABETH *(to* SHREWSBURY*).*

See, my Lord,
How I'm constrained.

SHREWSBURY.

I only ask delay.
The happiness and peace of thy whole life
Depend upon the issue. For long years
Hast thou had time to think and to reflect,
And shall one moment of tumultuous haste
Surprize thy wisdom? Grant a short delay
For recollection, and await the hour
Of calm composure.

BURLEIGH *(vehemently).*

Aye, delay and wait,
Till the whole realm's in flames, until at last
The foe shall strike with surer, deadlier aim.
Thrice from the blow has heaven preserved thy life,
To day it nearly touched thee, and again
To expect a miracle were to tempt God.

SHREWSBURY.

That God, who four times by his wonderous power
Hath shielded thee from ill, who to the arm
Of an old man hath this day given the strength
To o'ermaster ruffian violence—he deserves
Thy trust. I will not now attempt to plead
The cause of justice, 'tis not now the time.

In this wild storm, thou canst not hear its voice.
List but to this. Thou tremblest at the name
Of living Mary. Not the living one,
But the dead Mary, hast thou cause to fear.
Like the fell fiend of discord will she come
Back from her grave, and stalk throughout the land,
A vengeful ghost, to turn away the hearts
Of thy true subjects. Now, the Briton hates
Her whom he fears; but when she is no more,
He will avenge her. The beheaded queen
No longer will be present to his thoughts,
The dreaded enemy of his holy faith;
The hapless scion will he then behold
Of his much-honoured kings, who basely fell
The victim of thy jealousy and hate.
Soon wilt thou feel the change. Ride through the streets
Of London, when the bloody deed is done.
Shew thyself to the people, who were wont
To swarm around thee with their joyous shouts,
Thou'lt see another England, other faces.
For then no longer the majestic form
Of justice will surround thee, which subdued
Thy people's hearts. Fear, the dread satellite
Of tyranny, will march before thy steps,
And make a wilderness in every street.
Then will thy power have done its worst, what head
Can sleep in safety, since the anointed fell.

ELIZABETH.

Ah! Shrewsbury! to-day you saved my life!

You turned the assassin's dagger from my breast.
Why did you not permit the murderous steel
To find its destined way?—Then had this strife
Been ended; freed from doubt, and void of blame,
I then had rested in my quiet grave.
Truly, I'm sick of life and sovereign sway.
If heaven decrees, that one of us two queens
Must fall, to let the other live,—and sure
It must be so,—why should not I be she,
Who yields the palm—my people shall decide.
To them I do restore their sovereignty.
God is my witness, not for mine own sake,
But for my people's welfare have I lived.
If from the younger queen, this wheedling Stuart,
They hope for happier days, I from this throne
Would willingly descend, to pass my days
In Woodstock's lonely bowers, where whilom lived
My unpretending youth: there, far removed
From toys of earthly grandeur, did my heart
Find greatness in itself. I was not formed
To be a ruler, for a ruler must
Sometimes be cruel, and my heart is soft.
Over this island long and happily
I've reigned, because my power was only needed
To insure my people's happiness. Now comes
The first hard duty of my sovereignty,
And here I feel my weakness.

BURLEIGH.

Now, by heavens!
When from my sovereign's royal mouth I hear

Words so unkingly, traitor should I be
To my first duties, to my country's weal,
If I were longer silent. Thou hast said,
Thou lovest thy people, more than thine own self.
Now shew it! Do not choose peace for thy self;
And give thy realm to bloody strife a prey.
Think of the church! Shall popery return
With Mary Stuart? Shall the monk again
Renew his sway, and shall the Legate come
From Rome to shut our churches, to dethrone
Our monarchs? At thy hands I do require
The souls of all thy subjects,—they are saved,
Or lost, as thou this day shalt order it.
This is no time for mercy's voice to plead,
The highest duty is the public weal.
Has Shrewsbury saved thy life? I will do more,
I'll save my country from impending ruin.

ELIZABETH.

I would be left alone! in this great cause,
'Tis not man's wisdom that can give me aid:
To the great judge of all I must appeal.
What he shall teach me, I will do. My Lords!
You may withdraw.
(To DAVISON*)* Sir! you may wait hard by.

[*The Lords retire,* SHREWSBURY *alone stands still a few moments before the Queen, looks significantly, then slowly withdraws with an expression of the deepest anguish.*

ELIZABETH.

Oh! what a slavery is it, thus to court

The people's favour! wretched servitude!
How does this thraldom weary me, to smile
And fawn upon this lumpish idol, which
I do despise, even from my very soul.
When shall I sit in freedom on this throne?
I must respect opinion, I must strive
To win the people's favour, I must please
The fickle mob, whom nought but juggler's tricks
Can tickle and delight. He is no king,
Who needs must please the world. 'Tis he alone
Deserves the name, who recks not, when he acts,
Whether mankind applaud him or condemn.
Why have I practised justice all my life,
And shewn distaste of arbitrary deeds,
That for this first inevitable act
Of rigour, I myself should chain my hands?
My own example now condemns myself.
Were I a tyrant, like the Spanish Mary,
Who sate before me on the throne, I now
Might without blame have shed the blood of kings.
But was I just by free will? No. The voice
Of stern necessity, which binds the hands
Of mightiest kings, commanded me to use
This needful virtue, and obey its laws.
Begirt with foes, 'tis but the people's love
Upholds me on my oft-attempted throne.
The powers of Europe all combine to work
My overthrow. With ceaseless hate the Pope
Hurls his infuriate thunders at my head.
France, to betray me, gives the brother's kiss,

And, on the seas, the might of Spain prepares
An open, fierce, exterminating war.
So stand I singly, 'gainst a world in arms,
A feeble woman. I must try to veil,
With princely virtues, all those naked spots,
Which peep forth in my crown, the stain of birth,
Which my own father's mouth has stampt me with.
But vain my efforts. Envious hate lifts up
The veil, and sends this Stuart, this foul fiend,
To flit eternally across my path.
This fear shall have an end.—Her head must fall.
I will have peace! She is the very bane
Of my existence, the tormenting ghost,
Which destiny has sent to haunt my life.
Whenever hope had lured me with her smiles,
And my heart beat with joy, there lay the snake
Before me coiled. Even my beloved friend,
My destined bridegroom, has she torn from me.
The name of Mary Stuart is the name
Of every ill, which sinks me to the earth.
Were but that hated name razed from the scroll
Of living creatures, I am free again,
Free as the air upon the mountain tops.
How scornfully she bent on me her eyes,
As if their lightning glance would strike me dead.
Poor feeble wretch! I wield more potent arms,
Their touch is deadly, and thou art no more.

[*She approaches the table with hasty steps, and seizes the pen.*

Sayest thou I am a bastard? Luckless wretch!

I am so, only while thou livest to say it.
The doubt, which hangs over my princely birth,
When I destroy thee, is with thee destroyed.
When Britain has no longer power to choose,
Then is my birth legitimate and pure.

[*She signs with a hasty and firm stroke of the pen; then lets it fall, with an expression of horror. After a pause she rings.*

Enter DAVISON.

ELIZABETH.

Where are the other lords?

DAVISON.

They are gone forth,
To appease the unruly multitude. As soon
As Shrewsbury shewed himself, their giddy rage
Died in a moment. "There he is! that's he!"
A hundred voices cried at once, "who saved
"The life of our beloved queen! let's hear him,
"The bravest man in England." Then began
The noble Talbot, gently he rebuked
The people for their violence, and spoke
With such persuasive powerful eloquence,
The rioters were pacified, and stole
In silence from the spot.

ELIZABETH.

The fickle mob,
That bends, to every blast! Alas, for him,
Who leans upon this frail reed. Davison,

Tis well, you may retire;
(As he turns towards the door) and take again
This paper, I commit it to your hands.

DAVISON *(casts a glance upon the paper, and starts back).*

My liege—thy name—thou hast decided then!

ELIZABETH.

I was to sign it—'tis now done—a scroll
Of paper means but little, a mere name
Kills not.

DAVISON.

Thy name, my liege, hereto affixed,
Speaks awful things, and like the sulphurous bolt
Of heaven, with swiftest speed kills where it falls.
This warrant orders, that without delay
The Sheriff and Commissioners repair
To Fotheringhay, to the Scottish queen,
To tell her she must die, and that forthwith,
By morrow's dawn, the fatal blow be struck.
Here is no respite, when this fatal scroll
Parts from my hands, her mortal race is run.

ELIZABETH.

Yes, Sir, God has committed to your hands
A weighty destiny. Pray, that his grace
Vouchsafe to send you wisdom from on high.
I go—and recommend you to fulfil
The duties of your office.

DAVISON *(stepping before her).*

Oh! my liege,
Leave me not thus, ere yet thou hast declared

Thy sovereign will. My only wisdom here
Is rigidly to follow thy commands.
Say, hast thou placed this warrant in my hands,
That I should see it speedily enforced?

ELIZABETH.

Your own discretion must—

DAVISON *(interrupting her quick and terrified)*.

O God! not mine!
Forbid it heaven! my best discretion is
To obey. Thy servant dares not here decide,
Where error might destroy the sacred life
Of majesty itself. My soul recoils
With horror at the thought. Permit, my liege,
That in this weighty matter I should be
A blind and passive tool. Declare thy will
In plain explicit terms, what must be done
With this death-warrant.

ELIZABETH.

Why, its name declares it.

DAVISON.

Wilt thou then have it instantly enforced?

ELIZABETH *(hesitatingly)*.

I said not so—I tremble at the thought.

DAVISON.

Dost thou command that I should keep it then?

ELIZABETH *(quick)*.

'Tis at your peril—you shall answer it—

DAVISON.

I? God in heaven! Oh! speak, what means my liege?

ELIZABETH.

It is my will, that this unhappy matter
Be no more mentioned to me, let me rest
In peace about it, henceforth and for ever.

DAVISON.

It does but cost one word. Oh! say, my queen,
Vouchsafe to let me hear thy last resolve.

ELIZABETH.

I have declared it, teaze me, Sir, no further.

DAVISON.

Oh! pardon me, my gracious queen, as yet
Thou hast determined nothing—Oh! my liege,
Please to remember—

ELIZABETH *(stamps on the ground).*

Insupportable!

DAVISON.

Let not my queen be angry. 'Tis not long
Since first I hither came. I know not yet
The language of a court. I was brought up
In plain and simple fashion. Be not then
Impatient with thy servant. Let it not
Offend thee to inform me with one word
My clear and proper duty.

[*He approaches her in a supplicating posture; she turns her back on him. He stands in despair, and then speaks in a determined tone.*

Then take back
This writing! take it back! it burns my hands
As with a glowing fire-brand. Choose not me
To serve thee in this fearful business.

ELIZABETH.

Go, Sir, fulfil the duties of your office. [*Exit.*

DAVISON.

She goes! she leaves me in this dreadful state,
With this tremendous paper! What shall I do?
[*To* BURLEIGH, *who enters.*
'Tis well, my Lord, that you are come! 'twas you,
Who first preferred me to this weighty charge.
Release me from it now. I undertook
Its duties, little knowing what a load
It laid upon me. Let me back return
Into obscurity, where first you found me.
I am not fitted for this place.

BURLEIGH.

How, Sir!
Be calm. Where is the death-warrant? The queen
Called you into her presence.

DAVISON.

Even now
She went in wrath away. Oh! counsel me;
And save me from this agony of doubt.
Here is the warrant. Look, my Lord, 'tis signed.

BURLEIGH *(hastily).*

Is it indeed? Then give it—give it me.

DAVISON.

I dare not.

BURLEIGH.

What!

DAVISON.

She has not yet declared
Expressly what she wishes.

BURLEIGH.

Not expressly!
She signs her name—give it me.

DAVISON.

That I should
See it enforced,—and not enforced.—O God!
I know not what to do.

BURLEIGH *(pressing more earnestly)*.

This instant, Sir,
This instant, must you cause it be enforced.
Give it me! you're undone, if you delay.

DAVISON.

I am undone, if I should act too rashly.

BURLEIGH.

You sure have lost your senses—give it me.

[*He snatches the warrant from him, and runs off with it.*

DAVISON *(running after him)*.

What mean you? Stop—you plunge me in perdition.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Scene is in the Chamber of the 1st Act.

HANNAH KENNEDY *clad in deep mourning, with tearful eyes, and strong but suppressed anguish, is busied in sealing packets and letters. Her grief often interrupts her in what she is doing, and at intervals she appears to be silently praying.* PAULET *and* DRURY, *likewise in mourning, come in, followed by many servants, bringing in gold and silver vessels, looking glasses, pictures, and other costly articles, with which they fill the back-ground of the chamber.* PAULET *delivers to the Nurse a small casket, together with a paper, and gives her to understand by signs, that it contains a list of the things brought in. At the sight of these riches, the anguish of the Nurse is renewed. She sinks into a state of deep grief, while the others retire in silence.* MELVIL *comes in.*

KENNEDY *(calls out, as soon as she perceives him).*
Melvil! is't you? and are you come again?

MELVIL.
Yes, faithful Kennedy, we meet once more!

KENNEDY.
We have seen sad days, since last we parted.

MELVIL.

Aye,
And now what pain and grief to meet again.

KENNEDY.

O heavens! you come—

MELVIL.

To bid a last farewell,
A long and last farewell, to our dear queen.

KENNEDY.

Now, when the fatal morning of the death
Is come, at length they grant her to behold
Her long-lost friends. O Sir, I will not ask
How you have passed your days, I will not say
What we have suffered, since they tore you from us.
Hereafter will be time enough for that.
O Melvil! Melvil! that we should have lived
To see the dawn of this disastrous day.

MELVIL.

Let's not unman each other. Yes, I'll weep,
Long as the pulse of life beats at my heart.
Ne'er shall a smile be seen upon these cheeks,
Ne'er will I lay this sable garb aside,
But mourn for ever. Yet, on this sad day,
I will be firm. Do you too pledge your word,
Your grief to master, and when all the rest
Comfortless, sink into despair, let us,
With noble fortitude, conduct her steps,
And be her stay, upon the verge of death.

KENNEDY.

Melvil, you greatly err, if you believe

The queen needs our support to meet her fate
With firmness; she herself it is, who gives
To us the example of undaunted heart.
Oh! fear not. Ne'er will Mary Stuart die,
But as becomes a heroine and a queen.

MELVIL.

Did she with firmness hear the fatal news?
They say, that she was unprepared.

KENNEDY.

She was
Indeed. Far other horrors occupied
Her anxious thoughts. It was not death she feared:
But her deliverer, the young Mortimer,
He gave us hopes of liberty. He pledged
His word, by force last night to bear us hence.
And between hope and fear, in anxious doubt,
Whether she might entrust to this bold youth
Her royal person, did the queen await
The morning's dawn. Sudden within the walls,
We hear a stirring noise, repeated blows
From many a hammer fright the startled ear.
Then did we dream our brave deliverers nigh.
Hope whispered us, the sweet desire of life
Once more awaked all-powerful in the breast.
Then opes the chamber-door. Sir Amias comes,
To tell us that the workmen at our feet,
Had on the scaffold raised the murderous block.

[*She turns away in extreme anguish.*

MELVIL.

Eternal justice! tell me how the queen
Bore this tremendous change.

KENNEDY *(after a pause, in which she has somewhat recovered herself).*

She does not part
With life by slow gradations. All at once,
Quick, in the twinkling of an eye, her soul
Must take its leave of temporal, and ascend
To scenes eternal; and almighty God
Granted her, in this moment, to cast off,
With resolute firmness, every earthly hope,
And full of faith lift her whole soul to heaven.
No sign of pale affright, no word of plaint
Dishonoured her.—But when she heard the tale
Of Leicester's shameful treachery, and the fate
Of the poor youth, who died her life to save,
And saw the deep affliction of the knight,
Who by her means had lost his only hope,
Then 'gan her eyes to stream; not her own woes,
The woes of others forced her tears to flow.

MELVIL.

Where is she now? Could you not lead me to her?

KENNEDY.

She spent the remnant of the night in prayer,
Of her dear friends by letter took her leave,
And with her own hand wrote her testament.
She now enjoys a moment of repose,
And sleeps out her last slumber.

MELVIL.

Who is with her?

KENNEDY.

Her own physician, Burgoyne, and her women.

Enter MARGARET CURL.

KENNEDY.

How now, good Madam? is the queen awake?

CURL *(drying her tears).*

She is already dressed, and asks for you.

KENNEDY.

I go—*(to* MELVIL, *who is about to follow her)*
You must not follow, till the queen
Has been prepared to see you.

CURL.

Melvil here!
Our former steward!

MELVIL.

Yes, 'tis I!

CURL.

Alas!
This house needs now no steward. You are come
From London, Melvil! Have you nought to tell,
—No tidings of my husband?

MELVIL.

Yes, they say,
He will again be set at liberty,
As soon—

CURL.

As soon as the poor queen is dead.
Oh! the remorseless, treacherous, kindless villain!
He is our lady's murderer. They say,
She was condemned upon his evidence.

MELVIL.

'Tis true.

CURL.

May heaven's eternal vengeance blast
His perjured soul! His evidence was false.

MELVIL.

Bethink you, Madam, what you say.

CURL.

I'll swear
Before the bar of justice, to his face
I will repeat it, I will fill the world
With ceaseless clamours, that my lady dies
Innocent of the charge.

MELVIL.

Heaven grant it true.

Enter BURGOYNE.

BURGOYNE.

O Melvil!

MELVIL *(embracing him).*

Burgoyne!

BURGOYNE *(to* MARGARET CURL*).*

Bring a cup of wine,
And give it to our lady. Do it quick. [*Exit* CURL.

MELVIL.

How! is the queen not well?

BURGOYNE.

She feels herself
Wonderously strong, by her brave heart deceived;
She thinks she needs no nourishment, but yet
A dreadful trial has she to pass through.
And her foes shall not triumph in the thought,
That fear has blenched her cheeks, when nature sinks,
Exhausted by mere weakness and fatigue.

MELVIL *(to the nurse, who enters).*

Shall I go to her?

KENNEDY.

Soon will she be here.
—You seem to look around with wondering eyes,
As if you meant to ask, why all this pomp
And splendid pageant in the house of death.
Ah, Sir! while yet we lived, we suffered want,
But at our death plenty returns to us.

Enter two other waiting-women of MARY, *likewise in mourning. At sight of* MELVIL, *they burst into loud lamentations.*

MELVIL.

Ah, Gertrude! Rosamond! Alas! alas!
How sad the day on which we meet again!

SECOND WAITING-WOMAN.

She bade us leave her now. Alone, she would
For the last time hold converse with her God.

Enter MARGARET CURL, *bringing in a golden goblet of wine, which she sets upon the table, while she herself, pale and trembling, lays hold of a chair.*

MELVIL.

Why, how now, Madam, what astounds you so?

CURL.

O Heavens!

MELVIL.

What is it?

CURL.

What have I beheld!

MELVIL.

Collect yourself, and tell us what you saw.

CURL.

As with this cup I mounted the great stairs,
Adjoining to the hall below, the door
Was opened—I looked in and saw—O heavens!

MELVIL.

What did you see? Collect yourself.

CURL.

The walls
Were hung around with black, a scaffold huge,
O'erspread with sable cloth, rose from the ground,
On which a sable block and cushion stood,
And near them lay an axe, polished and bright.
The hall was thronged with men, who crowded round
The scaffold, and with eager murderous looks
Waited their victim.

THE WAITING-WOMEN.

Heaven preserve our lady!

MELVIL.

Be still, she comes!

Enter MARY; *she is dressed in white and festal garments; on her neck she wears an Agnus Dei, on a necklace of small beads: a wreath of roses hangs at her girdle, she has a crucifix in her hand, and a diadem in her hair; her large black veil is thrown back. At her entrance, all those, who are present, retire to the sides, and express the strongest emotion of sorrow.* MELVIL *involuntarily sinks upon one knee.*

MARY *(with calm dignity looking round the whole circle).*

Why do ye weep and wail? Ye should with me
Rejoice, that now the end of all my woes
At length approaches, that my bonds are loosed,
My prison opened, and the happy soul,
On angel-wings, ascends to endless freedom.
Then, when the proud foe seized me, and I bore
Unworthy treatment, such as a great queen
Might not befit, then was the time to weep.
—Death comes to me, with gentle, soothing hand,
To heal my woes—my last, my best of friends.
Beneath the covering of his sable wings
He hides my shames—the poor, the low-fallen wretch
Kindly ennobles, at his parting hour.

I feel the crown once more upon my brow,
And in my soul its ancient, noble pride.
[*She comes forward a few steps.*
How! Melvil here! not so, my worthy Sir!
Arise, you come not to behold the death,
You come to see the triumph of your queen.
How happy is my lot, beyond my hopes,
That my good name, in after times, not quite
Lies at my enemy's mercy, that a friend,
A confessor of our most holy faith,
Stands yet beside me, in the hour of death.
—Say, noble knight! how have you passed your days,
Since with rude force they tore you from my side?
Oft has my heart been pained to think of you.

MELVIL.

No other ills oppressed me, save my grief
For you, and that I wanted power to help.

MARY.

How fares good Didier, my old chamberlain?
The faithful man must long have closed his eyes
In endless sleep, for he was full of years.

MELVIL.

Heaven has not yet granted this wished-for grace,
He lives to weep upon thy youthful tomb.

MARY.

Oh! that I might have known the happiness,
Before my death, of pressing to my heart
But one loved kinsman of my royal race!
I now must perish in a foreign land,
Your tears alone my closing eyes shall see.

—Now, Melvil! to your faithful breast I give
My latest blessings on my friends. I bless
My royal brother, the Most Christian King,
And all the blood of France's royal house.
I bless the Cardinal, my honoured uncle,
And Henry Guise, my brave and noble cousin.
I also bless the Pope, of Christ on earth
The great vice-gerent, who to me returns
His holy blessing, and the Catholic King,
Who nobly offered his protecting arm,
To save me from the rancour of my foes.—
In my last will their names stand all set down,
They will accept the tokens of my love,
Though poor they be, nor, therefore, prize them less.
I have commended to my royal brother
Of France, to take you all under his care.
He'll see you well provided for, and give
To all of you a better, kindlier home.
And if my last request may move your minds,
Stay not in England, lest the southron feast
His barbarous heart on your calamities,
And see those in the dust, who once were mine.
Swear by this holy image on the cross,
That you will leave forthwith this fateful land,
Soon as my spirit quits this earthly mould.

MELVIL *(touching the crucifix).*

I swear obedience, in the name of all.

MARY.

What I, though poor and plundered, still possess,
And what I am allowed to call my own,

That I divide among you, and I hope
They will, in this, respect my testament.
That which I wear too, on this fatal day,
Is yours, permit me, but this once, to use
The stately trappings, on my road to heaven.
[*To the waiting-women.*
To you, my Alice, Gertrude, Rosamond,
I leave my clothes and jewels; youthful years
Are pleased with show and ornament. Thy claims,
Margaret, upon my kindness, stand the next,
For thee I leave the most unblest of all.
My legacy will shew thy husband's fault
Is not avenged on thee. But for my Hannah,
My faithful Hannah, gold and precious stones
Move not thy mind, to thee, full well I know,
The costliest jewel is my memory.
Take then this handkerchief. With my own hands,
For thee I wrought it in the hours of grief,
And in its texture wove my scalding tears.
Thou with this handkerchief shalt bind my eyes,
When it is come to that. I would receive
This last sad office from my Hannah's hand.

KENNEDY.

Melvil! I cannot bear it!

MARY.

Come then, all!
Come to me, and receive my last farewell.
[*She reaches out her hand; one after the other fall down at her feet, and kiss the hand, which she offers them, with unrestrained weeping.*

Fare thee well, Margaret—Alice, fare thee well!
Thanks, Burgoyne, for thy true and honest service.—
Thy lips are hot, my Gertrude,—I have been,
Alas! much hated, but as much beloved.
Blessed be my Gertrude with a husband's love,
For love alone can fill this glowing breast.—
My Bertha, thou hast chosen the better part,
And givest to heaven alone thy youthful charms.
Oh! haste thee to complete the holy vow.
The joys of earth are treacherous—this truth
Learn from thy queen's sad destiny—no more!
Farewell! farewell! eternally farewell!

[*She turns quick from them; all but* MELVIL *withdraw.*

MARY.

All, that on earth concerns me, now is done.
I trust that no one, when I leave the world,
Will call me debtor.—One thing yet remains,
Melvil, which presses on my troubled soul,
And clogs its free and happy flight to heaven.

MELVIL.

Disclose it to me. Ease thy troubled breast,
And to a faithful friend entrust thy cares.

MARY.

Upon eternity's dread brink I stand,
Soon in the presence of the awful judge
I must appear, and have not yet appeased
His holy justice. They deny to me
A priest of mine own church, and I disdain
The sacramental bread of heaven, from hands

Of counterfeited priests. Yes, I will die
In the communion of our holy church,
For she alone can ope the gates of heaven.

MELVIL.

Compose thy spirit. Heaven accepts the wish
Of pious fervour for the actual deed.
The tyrant's might can only bind the hands,
But free as air devout thoughts fly to heaven.
The word is dead. 'Tis faith which gives us life.

MARY.

The heart is not sufficient of itself;
Our faith requires an earthly pledge, to claim
Communion with the bliss of heaven. For this
Our God became incarnate, and the gifts
Of heaven, invisible to mortal eyes,
Inclosed mysterious in a human form.
It is our high and holy church, which plants
The ladder to conduct our steps to heaven:
And therefore called the Catholic, for the faith
Of each is strengthened by the faith of all.
Where thousands worship and adore, the glow
Bursts into flame, and, borne on eagle-wings,
The fervent spirit seeks the throne of God.
Ah! happy they, who in communion sweet
Worship their maker in his holy house!
The altar stands arrayed, the tapers blaze,
Tinkles the bell, the fragrant censer smokes;
Dressed in his robes, the bishop takes the cup,
And, blessing it, declares the wonderous power
Of God, by which the obedient element

Becomes the substance of the incarnate word;
While, at the sight of present deity,
The adoring crowd falls prostrate. But to me,
Alas! to me alone, is this denied,
The heavenly blessing comes not to my prison.

MELVIL.

Yes, it is nigh thee. Put thy trust in him,
Whose arm is mighty. In the hand of faith,
The withered staff can send forth tender shoots.
He, from the rock who called the water forth,
For thee in prison an altar can provide,
And the refreshment of this earthly cup
Turn to a quickening draught of heavenly grace.

[*He seizes the cup upon the table.*

MARY.

Melvil! how this? Oh! yes, I understand.
Here is no priest, no church, no sacrament.
But the Redeemer says, "when two or three
"Are in my name assembled, I am there."
What consecrates a priest, to be the Lord's
Interpreter, and speak his holy word?
A pure heart, and a life devoid of blame.
—So you, though unordained, can be my priest,
A messenger of God, to bring me peace.
To you my last confession will I make,
Your lips shall speak the pardon of my sins.

MELVIL.

If such a mighty zeal glows in thy breast,
Know, queen, that for thy comfort heaven can work
A special miracle. Here is no priest,

No church, thou sayest, no body of the Lord.
Thou errest—here is a priest—the holy host
Is present to thy wish.

[*At these words, he uncovers his head, and shews to her a consecrated wafer, in a golden cup.*

I am a priest—
To hear thy last confession, to announce
Peace to thy spirit in the hour of death,
Seven consecrations on my head were laid:
And from the Pope himself this host I bring,
Which with his own hands he did consecrate.

MARY.

Oh! shall these eyes, upon the verge of death,
Behold a heavenly feast before them spread!
As an immortal spirit on golden clouds
Descends, as erst the angel burst the bonds
Of Peter the apostle, him nor bolt
Nor bar can stay, nor jailor's threatening sword;
With mighty step, through close-locked gates he strides,
And radiant light dispels the dungeon's gloom,—
Thus to my longing eyes the messenger
Of heaven appears, when every earthly hope
Had sunk beneath me. Thou, my servant once,
Art now the servant and the holy mouth
Of the Most High, to utter his behests.
As to me, once, you humbly bent the knee,
So now I kneel before you. [*She kneels.*

MELVIL *(while he makes the sign of the cross over her).*

In the name
Of God the father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Hear, Mary, queen! hast thou with care thy heart
Examined, dost thou swear, without disguise,
To speak the truth, before the all-seeing God?

MARY.

My heart lies open before God and thee.

MELVIL.

Declare what sin, since thou didst last confess,
Presses thy conscience with its weight of guilt.

MARY.

My heart was filled with envious hate, the storm
Of vengeful passion raged within my breast.
From God I hoped forgiveness of my sins,
And yet forgave not her, who did me wrong.

MELVIL.

Dost thou repent the sin? and is thy heart
Resolved from this world to depart in peace?

MARY.

Yes, as I hope for mercy from my God.

MELVIL.

What other sin yet rests upon thy soul?

MARY.

Ah! not by hate alone, by sinful love
Have I still more offended the Most High.
My heart was vainly turned towards the man,
Who falsely left me in my deep distress.

MELVIL.

Dost thou repent the sin? and is thy heart
Turned from this idol to the living God?

MARY.

It was my hardest trial. I have striven,
And from my heart torn this last earthy band.

MELVIL.

What other sin upon thy conscience lies?

MARY.

Alas! a crime of blood, long since confessed,
Rises, fresh-bleeding, on my memory,
In the last moment of my great account,
And at heaven's portal flits across my path.
By my consent, the royal Darnley fell,
And to the murderer gave I heart and hand!
With rigid penance I've atoned the deed,
But still the restless worm gnaws at my heart.

MELVIL.

Is there yet any crime upon thy soul,
Which thou hast not atoned for, and confessed?

MARY.

Thou hast heard all—my conscience knows no more.

MELVIL.

Think on the presence of the all-seeing eye!
Think of the punishments, which holy church
Threatens for sins imperfectly confessed.
This is the sin to everlasting death,
The deadly sin against the Holy Ghost.

MARY.

So may eternal mercy grant me strength
For my last trial,—I have nought concealed.

MELVIL.

How! Dost thou then conceal from God the crime,
For which thy life is forfeit to the laws?
Thou tellest me nothing of the bloody part
In Babington's and Parry's traitorous deeds?
A temporal death thou diest for this act,
And wouldst thou for it die eternally?

MARY.

I am prepared to meet my great account.
Before the clock has run its hourly round,
I shall appear before my judge's throne:
But I repeat it, I have confessed all.

MELVIL.

Consider well. Our hearts deceive us all.
Perhaps thou hast, with treacherous double-sense,
Withheld the word, which makes thee criminal,
Although thy will gave sanction to the deed.
But know, that juggling tricks can nought avail
Against the eye of flame, which sees the heart.

MARY.

I summoned to my aid all christian kings,
To free me from unworthy bonds, but ne'er
Have I, by word or deed, no, nor in thought,
Attempted aught against the oppressor's life.

MELVIL.

Then have the secretaries witnessed false.

MARY.

It is as I have said. What they have sworn
The Lord will judge.

MELVIL.

Dost thou, free of this guilt,
Lay down in peace thy head upon the block?

MARY.

God has vouchsafed, that, by this guiltless death,
I should atone my ancient deed of blood.

MELVIL *(making over her the sign of the cross).*

So hence depart—atone it with thy death.
Lay on the altar thy devoted head,
Blood can atone the blood that has been spilt.
From female frailty were thy sins derived,
But purged from weakness, and the earthly dross
Contracted in this mortal coil, the spirit
Mounts to the mansions of eternal peace.
Now, by the sacred power to loose and bind,
Given to me from above, I here pronounce
Thy absolution from thy sins. As thou
Believest, so be thy eternal doom.

[*He gives to her the Host.*

Receive the holy body of the Lord.

[*He lays hold of the cup, which stands upon the table, consecrates it with silent prayer, then reaches it to her. She hesitates to take it, and motions it back with her hands.*

Receive the blood, which for thy sake was shed,
Take it! the Pope has granted thee this grace.
In death thou art allowed to exercise

The highest right of kings, the right of priests.

[*She receives the cup.*

And as thou now, in this thy earthly frame,
Hast held mysterious union with thy God,
So wilt thou, yonder in the realms of bliss,
Where neither guilt is known, nor sorrowing tear,
Transfigured to a glorious angel, dwell
In endless union with the King of Kings.

[*He sets the cup down. Upon a noise being heard at the door, he covers his head and goes to it.* MARY *remains upon her knees in silent devotion.*

MELVIL *(returning).*

A hard and painful trial yet awaits thee.
Feelest thou within thee strength to overcome
All rising thought of bitterness and hate?

MARY.

I trust in God. I fear not a recoil.
To heaven I've offered up my hate and love.

MELVIL.

Prepare then to receive the Earl of Leicester
And the Lord Treasurer Burleigh. They are here.

Enter BURLEIGH, LEICESTER, *and* PAULET. LEICESTER *remains quite in the back-ground, without raising his eyes.* BURLEIGH, *who observes his attitude, steps between him and the Queen.*

BURLEIGH.

Mary of Scotland, I am come to take
Your last commands and wishes.

MARY.

Thanks, my Lord.

BURLEIGH.

It is the will of my most gracious queen,
That all your just requests be granted you.

MARY.

My wishes stand recorded in my will.
I've given it to Sir Amias Paulet's hands,
And beg it may be faithfully enforced.

BURLEIGH.

That be assured, it shall.

MARY.

I further beg
Permission for my servants to return
To France or Scotland, as their several wish
May prompt them, unmolested.

BURLEIGH.

Be it so.

MARY.

And since my lifeless body may not rest
In consecrated ground, permit this true
And faithful servant to convey my heart
To France, and to my dearest relatives.
Alas! 'twas ever there.

BURLEIGH.

It shall be done.
Would you ought further?

MARY.

Carry to the queen
My kindly salutation—say to her

I do forgive her from my inmost soul
My death, my hasty words of yesterday
I do repent, and heartily implore
Her pardon. God preserve her royal life,
And bless her with a long and prosperous reign.

BURLEIGH.

But say, persist you in your first intent?
Reject you still the assistance of the dean?

MARY.

I have appeased my God. Sir Amias,
To you, alas!- I have unwittingly
Caused much sorrow. I have torn from you
The staff of your old age. Oh! let me hope
My name will not live in your memory,
The object of your hate and bitterness.

PAULET *(gives her his hand).*

Heaven's blessing on your soul—depart in peace.

HANNAH KENNEDY *and the other women rush in with signs of affright: the Sheriff follows them with a white staff in his hand, and behind him are seen through the doors, which remain open, armed men.*

MARY.

How now, my Hannah? yes, my hour is nigh!
The sheriff comes to lead me to my fate.
I must depart—farewell!
[Her women hang about her in violent grief.
(To MELVIL.*)* You, worthy Sir,
And my dear Hannah, shall attend my steps

On my last journey. Surely, my Lord Burleigh
Will not refuse me this.

BURLEIGH.

Madam, for that
I have no warrant.

MARY.

How! can you refuse
So small a favour? Will you not respect
My sex's claims? What hands shall at the last
Do me the needful services? It ne'er
Could be my sister's pleasure, that in me
My sex should be insulted, that these men,
With their rude hands, should touch my royal person.

BURLEIGH.

'Tis ordered, that no woman shall ascend
With you the scaffold—their loud shrieks and moans—

MARY.

She shall not shriek or moan—I'll answer for
My Hannah's firmness. Do, my Lord, be kind.
Do not take from me in my dying hour
My nurse, and foster-mother. Her dear arms
Bore me into this world. Oh! let her now
With gentle hand conduct me to my death.

PAULET *(to* BURLEIGH*)*.

Permit it so.

BURLEIGH.

Then be it.

MARY.

Now I have
Done with this world.

[*She takes the crucifix, and kisses it.*

My Saviour! my Redeemer!
As thou upon the cross didst stretch thine arms,
So stretch them now to take my parting soul.

[*She turns herself to go; at this moment her eye meets the* EARL OF LEICESTER'S, *who, at her motion, had involuntarily raised his head to look at her. As their glances meet,* MARY *trembles, her knees fail her, and she is upon the point of sinking; the* EARL OF LEICESTER *steps forward and supports her in his arms. She looks at him for some time in solemn silence, he is unable to bear her looks, at last she speaks.*

MARY.

You keep your word, Lord Leicester, faithfully.
You promised me your arm, to lead me forth
Out of this prison, and now you lend it me.

[*He stands as if annihilated. She continues with a softer tone.*

Yes, Leicester, not for liberty alone
I wished to thank you, but that liberty
You would have made the sweeter by the gift
Of softest friendship; heightened by your love,
I hoped once more to taste the joys of life.
Now, when about to part from this vain world
And be a blessed spirit, whom earthly joys
No more can move, without the blush of shame
I may confess the weakness I've subdued.
Farewell, and if it may, let happiness
Attend your steps; you have disdained, betrayed

A tender, loving heart, in hopes to win
A proud, disdainful one; kneel at the feet
Of Queen Elizabeth, and may your prize
Not prove your punishment. Farewell for ever!
—And now nought more remains to me on earth.

[*She goes away, preceded by the Sheriff,* MELVIL *and the Nurse at her side,* BURLEIGH *and* PAULET *follow, the rest in tears follow her with their eyes, till she disappears, they then go off through the other two doors.*

LEICESTER *(alone remaining behind).*

And do I live? can I yet bear to live?
Falls not this roof to crush me with its weight?
Does no abyss open to swallow up
The veriest wretch on earth? What have I lost!
Oh! what a precious pearl I've thrown away!
What heavenly bliss I've cast from me for ever!
—She goes to regions of eternal joy,
And leaves me to the darkness of despair.
—Where now my purposed firmness, my design
To drown the warm emotions of my heart
In senseless apathy? to see, unmoved,
Her falling head? And does the sight of her
Revive my torpid shame? Must she in death
Intwine me with the bands of tender love?
—Unhappy wretch! It boots no longer here
To melt in streams of womanish tenderness.
The bliss of love lies not upon thy path,
Thy breast should be inclosed in iron mail,

Thy brow should be a rock. Wouldst thou not lose
The gains of thy base deed, boldly thou must
Assert and execute the deed. Be dumb
The voice of piteous love, eyes turn to stone.
I'll be a witness, yes, I'll see her fall.

[*He goes with a resolute step towards the door, through which* MARY *had disappeared, but stands still half-way.*

In vain! in vain! horror arrests my steps!
I cannot bear to see the dreadful deed.
I cannot see her die—Hark! what was that?
They are now below—beneath my very feet
Already is the dreadful work begun.
I hear their voices—Oh! away! away!

[*He attempts to escape by another door, but finds it fastened, and comes back.*

How does some God enchain me to the spot!
Must I then hear, what mine eyes dare not see?
Now the dean speaks—he solemnly exhorts—
She interrupts him—hark! she prays aloud—
With steady voice—now—all is still—quite still—
I only hear the women's sobs and moans—
Now they undress her—hark! they move the chair—
She kneels upon the cushion—lays her head—

[*After he has pronounced the last words with increasing anguish, and remained silent a short while, he is suddenly convulsed, and falls down in a fainting fit; at the same time a hoarse murmur is heard from below, which lasts a long time.*

SCENE II.

The second Chamber of the 1st Act.

ELIZABETH *(enters from a side door, her step and features express the strongest uneasiness).*

What! no one come! no message! will it ne'er
Be evening? Does the sun stay in his course!
I must remain yet longer on the rack.
Is the deed done? or not—Ah me! I dread
Both equally—and yet I dare not ask.
I neither see Lord Leicester nor Lord Burleigh,
Whom I had named to execute the sentence.
If they are gone from hence, then is the deed
Already done, the shaft is shot, it flies,
It hits the mark, and, were my crown at stake,
I could not stop its course.—Within! who waits?

Enter a Page.

Why comest thou back alone? where are the Lords?

PAGE.

The Earl of Leicester and the High Treasurer—

ELIZABETH *(with the utmost eagerness).*

Where are they?

PAGE.

They are not in London.

ELIZABETH.

No!

Where are they then?

PAGE.

No one could tell me where.

Before the dawn of morning, both the Lords,
With quick dispatch, and full of mystery,
Had left the town.

ELIZABETH *(breaking out with vivacity).*

Then am I England's queen.

[*Walking up and down, in the greatest emotion.*

Go—call me—no, you may remain—she's dead!
And on this earth at last I've room to breathe.
Why do I tremble? why this anxious dread?
My fears are in the grave, and who dares say
I did the deed? I'll teach my ready tears
To flow in plenty o'er this fallen queen.
(To the Page.) Still here? Go bid the Secretary Davison
Appear before me instantly. And send
To fetch the Earl of Shrewsbury—see, he comes—

[*Exit Page.*

Enter the EARL OF SHREWSBURY.

Welcome, my noble Lord! what news astir?
It can be no small thing, which brings your steps
Hither so late.

SHREWSBURY.

My gracious sovereign liege,
My anxious heart, concerned for thy renown,
Drove me to seek the Tower, where Nau and Curl,
The secretaries of the Scottish queen,

Are kept in durance. For I wished, once more,
To sift the truth of what they both had sworn.
The governor, embarrassed and perplexed,
Refused to shew me where his prisoners lay.
My threats at last o'ercame his scrupulous fears.
Heavens! what a sight was there! With frantic looks
And matted hair, as if by fiends assailed,
Lay stretched upon his couch the wretched Curl.
Soon as the unhappy man knew me, he fell
Down at my feet, and in despair embraced
My knees, writhing before me like a worm.
He prayed me and conjured, that I would tel.
The fate of his unhappy queen; for fame
Had forced into the dungeons of the Tower
The fatal news, that she was doomed to die.
As I confirmed the truth of this report,
And added, that it was his evidence,
On which she suffered, raging up he sprang;
Seizing his fellow prisoner, to the earth
He tore him down, and with the giant strength
Of madness strove to throttle him. We scarce
Saved the poor wretch from the fell madman's grasp.
Thereat, upon himself he turned his rage,
And beat his breast with furious blows, nor ceased
To vent upon his comrade and himself,
The direst curses, calling all the fiends
Of hell to seize upon their guilty souls.
He vowed his evidence was false, the letters
To Babington he swore in open court
Were genuine, all a forgery, that he wrote

Words other than the queen had dictated,
Thereto seduced by the false traitor Nau.
Then flew he to the window, by main strength
He burst it open, cried into the streets
Below, while all the people crowded round,
He was the Scottish secretary, the wretch,
Who falsely had accused his queen, his soul
Was lost for ever, he had falsely sworn.

ELIZABETH.

You said he was beside himself. The words
Of a poor lunatic, crazed in his wits,
Prove nothing.

SHREWSBURY.

Yet this madness self, my queen,
Conveys strong argument. Oh! let our prayers
Move thee to pause, and grant a further hearing.

ELIZABETH.

I will do so—to meet your wishes, Earl,
But ne'er can I believe, my noble Peers
Would judge in such a matter hastily.
Yet, for your peace of mind, we will renew
The investigation—'tis not yet too late.
No doubt, or shade of doubt, will we permit
Upon our royal honour to remain.

Enter DAVISON.

The warrant, Sir, which in your hands I placed,
Where is it?

DAVISON *(in the utmost astonishment).*

The warrant!

ELIZABETH.

Which I yesterday
Committed to your keeping.

DAVISON.

To my keeping!

ELIZABETH.

The clamorous mob importuned me to sign,
I thought it best to humour them, and did it,
Under compulsion did it, in your hands
I placed the warrant, merely to gain time.
You well know what I said—give it me back.

SHREWSBURY.

Restore it, worthy Sir,—the case is altered.
The matter will be further sought into.

ELIZABETH.

Consider not so long—where is the warrant?

DAVISON *(in despair).*

I am undone—I'm lost beyond all hope.

ELIZABETH *(hastily interrupting him).*

I will not, Sir, suppose—

DAVISON.

I'm lost, for ever!
I have it not.

ELIZABETH.

How! what!

SHREWSBURY.

O God in heaven!

DAVISON.

It is in Burleigh's hands, since yesterday.

ELIZABETH.

Unhappy man! 'tis thus you have obeyed me!
Did I not strongly caution you to keep it?

DAVISON.

My gracious queen, you never cautioned me.

ELIZABETH.

Wretch! wilt thou force a lie into my mouth?
When did I order thee to give it up
To Burleigh.

DAVISON.

Not in terms express and clear—
But—

ELIZABETH.

Caitiff, wretch! presumest thou to interpret
My words? To load them with the bloody sense
Of thine own thoughts? Alas! for thee, if aught
Of mischief should from this thy deed ensue,
Thy life shall pay the forfeit. Noble Earl,
You see how they abuse my royal name.

SHREWSBURY.

I see—O heavens!

ELIZABETH.

What said you?

SHREWSBURY.

If in this,
At his own peril, he has done the act,
Without thy privity, before the peers
He must be called to answer; for this deed

Has made thy sacred name to aftertimes
A name of foulest loathing and reproach.

Enter BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH *(kneels to the Queen).*
Long live my royal mistress—may her foes,
Upon this island, perish like the Stuart!

[SHREWSBURY *covers his face;* DAVISON *wrings his hands in despair.*

ELIZABETH.
Tell us, my Lord, did you from me receive
The fatal warrant?

BURLEIGH.
No, my royal liege,
From Davison.

ELIZABETH.
And did he in my name
Give it to you?

BURLEIGH.
No, that I cannot say.

ELIZABETH.
Have you then dared thus rashly to enforce
The warrant, ere you first had known my will?
The sentence was most just, the world cannot
Reproach us, but 'twas insolently done,
Thus to encroach on our prerogative.
(To DAVISON.*)* A sterner judgment waits upon thy crime,
Who hast o'erstept the limits of thy power.

Carry him to the Tower; it is my will
That of high treason he be straight impeached.
—My noble Talbot! you alone I find,
Among my counsellors, upright and wise.
Henceforth be you my leader and my friend.

SHREWSBURY.

Banish not thy best friends, confine them not
In prison, who for thee have acted thus,
And for thee now keep silence. But for me,
Most mighty queen, permit that I the seal,
Which for twelve years was trusted to my hands,
May now return to thee.

ELIZABETH *(surprised)*.

No, Shrewsbury!
You will not leave me now—

SHREWSBURY.

Pardon, my liege,
I am too old, and this right hand too stiff,
To put the seal upon thy future deeds.

ELIZABETH.

And will the man, who lately saved my life,
Forsake me?

SHREWSBURY.

Ah! but little have I done—
I could not save thy nobler part, thy fame.
Reign long and happily. Thy foe is dead.
Nought hast thou now to care for or to fear.

[*Exit* SHREWSBURY.

ELIZABETH *(to the* EARL OF KENT, *who comes in)*.

Let my Lord Leicester come.

KENT.

He craves, my liege,
To stand excused, he is embarked for France.

[*She makes an effort to suppress her emotion, and stands in a tranquil attitude. The curtain drops.*

END OF MARY STUART.

THE

MAID OF ORLEANS,

A TRAGEDY.

REMARKS UPON SCHILLER'S MAID OF ORLEANS.

The Maid of Orleans first appeared as an Almanac, in the year 1801, at Berlin, in small octavo; afterwards the author prepared it more expresaly for the stage, and the new Theatre at Berlin was opened with its first representation on the 1st of January, 1803. It was printed in this new shape in the same year, in larger octavo.

This piece was received with great attention, though not with the accustomed rapture, which had been excited by Schiller's earlier theatrical productions. In the world of taste, Joanna was just as extraordinary and surprising an appearance, as she had formerly been in history; to be captivated with her it was necessary to cultivate a nearer acquaintance. A romantic tragedy, in the view which Schiller took of it, was something unheard of in Germany. It was the general wish and expectation to see a pure historical piece, without the introduction of supernatural agency; and it was asserted that the mere human Joanna would lay more hold upon the feelings, than the inspired female of Schiller; and in this respect a decided preference was given to Don Carlos and Mary Stuart.

Whether this decision be well grounded or not, it must be acknowledged, that the poet has bestowed a very unusual degree of labour upon the characters in this work, and thereby exhibited in a brilliant light the depth of his creative genius. Joanna is full of simple and modest dignity, full of beautiful unassuming submission in every thing, which relates to herself alone; but how different does she appear, when she acts in her calling as the inspired deliverer! The scene, in which she is first impressed with the supernatural workings, is described with infinite majesty and elevation;

the fire, with which she speaks and acts, appears like inspiration itself. And when she tries to move the Duke of Burgundy to a reconciliation, how childishly simple and yet how persuasive is her speech! Then first she sinks down to a mere woman when she feels herself guilty; then she throws herself into Sorel's arms, and wishes, with burning tears, to return to her youthful pursuits and peaceful cottage; and it is only by a glorious death that she is restored to herself.

Agnes Sorel forms a delightful contrast to the maid, described as she is, so noble, so kind-hearted, and condescending. Even the good-natured, thoughtless, noble-hearted Charles interests us with all his weaknesses; the pliable undecided Duke of Burgundy, the spiteful Queen, the bold, rough, and contemptuous, but brave Talbot, the beautiful Lionel, all rise boldly into life, and enter with spirit into the well concerted action. And the noble bastard, the brave and modest La Hire, all are drawn with the same individuality; as if by the voice of enchantment, the voice of the poet seems to have called them into existence from the slumber of past centuries.

Besides the detailed criticisms upon this dramatic poem in the ordinary literary newspapers, we have a dissertation upon Schiller's "Maid of Orleans," by A. Klingemann, published at Leipzig, 1802, 8vo. A French translation appeared under the title, "*Jeanne d'Arc*," *trad. par Ch. F. Cramer, à Paris*, 1802, large 8vo.; but it is flat, diffuse, and incorrect. This tragedy has also been translated into Dutch. Hitherto no English translation has appeared in print.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHARLES THE SEVENTH, King of France.
QUEEN ISABELLA, his mother.
AGNES SOREL, his mistress.
COUNT DUNOIS, bastard of Orleans.
LA HIRE,
DU CHATEL, } *Officers about the King.*
Archbishop of Rheims.
CHATILLON, a Knight of Burgundy.
RAOUL, a Knight of Lorraine.
TALBOT, English Commander in Chief.
LIONEL,
FASTOLF, } *English Generals.*
MONTGOMERY, a Welshman.
Senators of Orleans.
An English Herald.
THIBAUT OF ARC, a rich Countryman.
MARGOT,
LOUISA,
JOANNA, } *His daughters.*
STEPHEN,
CLAUDE MARIE,
RAIMOND, } *Their suitors.*
BERTRAND, another Countryman.

The Apparition of a Black Knight.
Woodman and Woodman's wife.
Soldiers and people. Servants of the Crown, Bishops, Monks, Marshals, Magistrates, Courtiers, and other dumb characters in the procession of the Coronation.

THE

MAID OF ORLEANS.

PROLOGUE. SCENE I.

A rural landscape. In the foreground upon the right a Saint's image in a chapel; on the left a lofty oak.

THIBAUT OF ARC. *His three daughters. Three young shepherds, their lovers.*

THIBAUT.

YES, dearest neighbours! this day sees us yet
Frenchmen, and masters of the ancient soil,
Which our forefathers tilled; to morrow's sun
May chance to give us to another lord.
For o'er our fields the English banner floats
Triumphant, and our foeman's fiery horse
Tramples the produce of our fruitful plains.
Paris already has unlocked her gates,
To hail the conqueror, and the ancient crown
Of Dagobert placed on a foreign brow.
The luckless offspring of our kings is doomed

Through his own realms to wander as an outcast;
And 'gainst him in the English ranks is ranged
His cousin and the premier peer of France.
Even his own mother leads them on to battle.
On all sides round, our towns and villages
Are laid in ashes, and each anxious day
Rolls nearer towards us ruin's wild career,
Where peace yet lingers in these quiet vales.
Therefore with God's help am I purposed,
My dearest friends, while yet the power remains,
To see my daughters wedded, for a female,
In times like these, needs a protector's arm,
And true love lightens all the ills of life.
(To the first shepherd). Come, Stephen! you have wooed my daughter Margot,
Our acres are by friendly borders joined,
And love unites the hearts. All this forebodes
A happy marriage.
(To the second). Claude Marie you speak not!
And my Louisa downward casts her eyes.
Shall I forbid the union of two hearts,
Which love has joined, because you have no wealth
To offer? Who can now be counted rich?
Are not our barns and houses doomed the prey
Of the next fire or foe, who comes to spoil us?
The brave man's breast alone, in times like these,
Can shelter helpless innocence.

LOUISA.

My father!

CLAUDE MARIE.

My own Louisa!

LOUISA *(embracing* JOANNA*).*

Dearest, dearest sister!

THIBAUT.

I give to each my daughters thirty acres,
A herd of cattle, fold, and stable—God
Has blessed me richly, and so bless I you.

MARGOT *(embracing* JOANNA*).*

Oh! cheer our father! look to our example,
And let one day unite three joyful pairs.

THIBAUT.

Go make you ready. To morrow is the wedding,
And every villager shall share our joy.

[*The two couples go off arm in arm.*

Joanna, thy two sisters pledge their vows
In wedlock, and it cheers my aged heart
To see them happy, thou, my youngest child,
Causest thy father pain and bitterness.

RAIMOND.

Oh! say not so! why should you chide your daughter.

THIBAUT.

See here this gallant shepherd, and our plains
Hold not his match in worth and excellence,
'Tis now three harvests, bends his heart to thee,
In silent love and tenderest affection,
Which thou with proud disdain coldly return'st.
Who now of all our swains can ever hope
To win from thee one smile of kind regard?
—The freshest bloom of youth sits on thy cheek,

Now is thy spring and hope's delightful prime,
The beauties of thy shape are all disclosed,
Yet still my anxious eyes cannot discern
The tender flower of love burst from its bud,
And ripen onward to the golden fruit.
Oh! this is grievous to me, it denotes
A strange and wayward nature, to refuse
In the warm flush of life all taste of joy.

RAIMOND.

Good father, be content! Leave her alone!
The love of my adorable Joanna
Is like some noble fruit, and still the best
And noblest fruits ripen with slowest growth.
Yet loves she on the mountain heights to rove,
And from the dewy heath fears she to come
Down to the haunts of men, where eating cares
And low-born passions dwell. Oft from the vale
Wondering have I beheld her noble form,
Upon the upland pastures, as she stood
In towering dignity, tending her flock;
And brooding high resolves she seemed, as one
That to our times belonged not.

THIBAUT.

This it is,
'Tis even this which so displeases me.
She shuns her sisters' cheerful company,
And, e'er the cock has crowed his mattin song,
Leaves she her bed to seek the lonely hills.
Oft in the hour of darkness, when we men
Most need each other's fellowship, glides she forth,

Like the sly owl, into the awful reign
Of the ghost-loving night, and on the cross-way
Holds secret converse with the mountain air.
Tell me, why she should always choose this spot,
Why ne'er to other pastures drive her flock.
I see her sit whole hours, in musings wrapt,
Under the fairy tree, the very spot,
Which all but luckless creatures gladly shun.
Here is no monstrous shape, a wicked sprite
Has from the olden times of heathenism,
Under this self-same tree made his abode.
The oldest villagers tell fearful tales
Concerning it, and oft the peasant hears,
As home he hies at eve, from its dark boughs,
A wonderous hum of strange unearthly voices.
Once I myself remember, as at nightfall
I passed this tree, returning home, I saw
A ghostly female sitting under it,
That from her long and flowing mantle stretched
A withered hand towards me, beckoning me
To come to her, but I, forsooth, in haste
Said a short prayer, and hurried from her sight

RAIMOND *(pointing to the image in the chapel).*

It is the sacred influence of that image,
Which all around a holy calm diffuses,
Not Satan's work which hither draws her steps.

THIBAUT.

Oh! no! no! Not in vain am I forewarned
In dreams and anxious visions. Three times have I
Seen her at Rhelms sit on the royal seat;

A sparkling diadem of seven stars
Beamed on her head, a sceptre in her hand,
From which three golden lilies issued forth,
And I her father, and her sisters twain,
The princes, counts, the lords, and archbishops,
The king himself, before her bowed the head.
Whence comes such splendour in my humble cot?
Oh! it betokens a disastrous fall.
This warning dream shews me, in bodily shape,
The idle workings of her heart's conceit.
She thinks shame of her lowly birth; 'cause heaven
Has gifted her with wonderous faculties,
Far above all the maidens of this vale,
Therefore her heart is swoln with sinful pride;
And pride it was by which the angels fell,
By pride hell fastens on the human heart.

RAIMOND.

Your pious daughter sure above all maids
Of meek and modest virtue is the pattern.
Does she not freely serve her elder sisters?
She far excels all others, yet you see her,
Like a low maid, with duteous humbleness,
Perform the hardest tasks. Under her hands,
Your herds and flocks most wonderously do thrive:
Whate'er she undertakes, unwonted luck
Attends her doings and rewards her toil.

THIBAUT.

All this is true. Unwonted luck! I feel
A sort of horror at this kind of blessing.
No more of this. I must be dumb. Shall I

Accuse my own dear child? I'll pray for her,
If I can do nought else, and warn her well,
For I must warn her. Shun that fearful tree,
Stay not alone—and at the midnight hour
Dig not for roots, prepare no drinks, and write
No letters in the sand. The band of spirits
Is easily aroused, they lie in wait
Under the slightest cover, and eftsoons
Start at a word, and hurry into mischief.
Stay not alone then, in the wilderness
Satan once tempted heaven's almighty Lord.

Enter BERTRAND *with a helmet in his hand.*

RAIMOND.

Peace now! see Bertrand from the town returns!
Look what he brings!

BERTRAND.

You gaze and seem surprized,
To see me with so strange an implement.

THIBAUT.

We are indeed. Pray, tell us how this helm
Came to your hands: why do you hither bring
This deadly token to the land of peace?

[JOANNA, *who in the former part of the scene had remained still, and without taking an interest in what was going on, becomes attentive and draws nearer.*

BERTRAND.

Scarce I myself can tell you how this thing

Fell to my lot. I had at Vaucouleurs
Purchased an iron tool, where in the mart
I found a thronging crowd, for fugitives
Had brought from Orleans tidings of defeat.
Scared at the news the affrighted citizens
All ran together; and as through the press
I worked my way, a dark-faced female gypsey,
Bearing this helmet, fixed her eyes on me,
And said, "good friend, I see you seek a helm,
" I know you seek one; come, you shall have this;
" For a small price, 'tis yours." I answered her,
Go to the fighting men, I want no helm,
I'm but a countryman. But she would not
Be answered so, and thus her speech renewed.
" What man dares say, he does not want the helm?
" An iron roofing for the head is now
" Of far more value than a house of stone."
And thus she followed me, through every street,
Pressing the helm on me. I looked at it,
Saw it was bright and beautiful, and fit
To grace a knightly head; and as I poised it,
Doubtingly in my hand, much wondering
At this most strange adventure, suddenly
The gypsey disappeared, the stream of people
Bore her away, leaving the helm with me.

JOANNA *(eagerly grasping at it).*

Give me the helm!

BERTRAND.

What wouldst thou do with it?
This warlike casque suits not a maiden's brow.

JOANNA *(forcibly seizes the helmet).*

The helmet's mine, no one shall take it from me.

THIBAUT.

What can the girl be dreaming of?

RAIMOND.

Oh! give it her.
Well does this warlike ornament become her,
For in her breast lodges a manly heart.
Ye wist how she subdued the tiger-wolf,
That fierce and ravenous monster, which had thinned
Our sheep-folds. While the shepherds stood aloof,
She all alone, the lion-hearted maid,
Strove with the wolf, and tore the lamb from him,
Which he was bearing in his bloody jaws.
However valiant be the head that wears
This helm, none can beseem it better.

THIBAUT *(to* BERTRAND*).*

Tell us,
What's this mischance, you spake of, in the field?
What news came with the fugitives?

BERTRAND.

God help
Our noble king, and spare this wretched land.
We have been worsted in two hard-fought fields,
The foe is in the midst of France; our lands
On yon side of the Loire are all his own.
And now he has assembled his whole might,
With purpose to beleaguer Orleans.

THIBAUT.

Oh! heaven protect our king!

BERTRAND.

From every side
His cannon is arrived in countless numbers.
And as the bees, beneath a summer's sun,
In darkening clusters swarm around the hive;
As from the blackening air the locust-cloud
Descending, many a rood along the fields,
Hides all the herbage with unnumbered wings,
So thick a cloud of warriors poured upon
The plain of Orleans; and within the camp
Of various tongues the barbarous dissonance,
In confused murmur mixt, assails the ear.
Hither the mighty Duke of Burgundy
Has brought his vassals, from Luxemberg and Luttick,
From Hennegau, and from the land of Namur,
Those who inhabit Brabant's happy plains,
The dissolute men of Ghent, who deck themselves
In silk and velvet, them who in Zealand dwell,
In towns and lands won from the sea's domain,
The cattle-milking Hollander, and those
From Utrecht, even from the lands remote
Of western Friesland, fronting the icy pole.
All these beneath the ensigns of the Duke
Are banded, and they threaten Orleans.

THIBAUT.

Alas for France! that her unnatural sons
Should turn their swords against their mother's breast!

BERTRAND.

Even she, the aged queen, proud Isabelle,
Clad in a coat of mail, rides through the camp,

And with her poisonous words stirs up the people
To deadly rage against her royal son,
Whom with her own breasts she has nourished.

THIBAUT.

Plague light upon her! May the wrath of heaven
Blast her, as once it did proud Jesabel!

BERTRAND.

The valiant Salisbury, who destroyed the Moors,
Leads the besiegers, with him Lionel,
The lion's brother, and Talbot, whose fell sword
Mows down our people, when the combat burns.
These have, with horrid oath, together sworn,
To give our virgins to the soldier's lust,
And to the sword's edge what the battle spares.

[JOANNA *listens with increased attention, and puts on the helmet.*

THIBAUT.

Where were the swords of all our valiant chiefs,
La Hire, Saintraillers, and our kingdom's flower,
The noble-minded Dunois, that the foe
Could with resistless force push on so far?
And does the king himself look idly on,
To see France ravaged, and our cities fall?

BERTRAND.

The King at Chinon holds his court, but men
Are wanting, and he dares not keep the field.
What boots the leaders might, the hero's arm,
When pale affright palsies the soldier's heart?
A panic dread, as if from heaven itself,
Has seized upon the breasts even of our bravest.

In vain the generals issue their commands.
And as the timorous flocks together throng,
When from their pens they hear the howling wolf,
Even so, forgetful of his ancient fame,
The Frenchman flies for refuge to his castles.
One knight alone, so by report I heard,
Has brought together a small band of men,
And carried sixteen standards to the king.

JOANNA *(hastily).*

What is his name?

BERTRAND.

His name is Baudricour.
Scarce has he 'scaped the enemy's hot pursuit,
Who with two armies follow at his heels.

JOANNA.

Where halts the knight? Tell me, if you know aught.

BERTRAND.

Scarce a day's journey 'tis from Vaucouleurs.

THIBAUT.

What's this to thee, girl? Sure such questioning
Becomes thee not.

BERTRAND.

The men of Vaucouleurs,
Seeing the foe so mighty, and the king
Unable to protect them, have resolved
To give their city up to Burgundy.
So shall we 'scape a foreign yoke, and live
Under our royal line; yea, and perchance
The king may yet recover his just rights,
If e'er the Duke and France are reconciled.

JOANNA *(in prophetic extacy).*

No talk of treaty! none of base surrender!
See, the deliverer comes and arms for battle.
The fortune of our foe before the walls
Of Orleans shall be wrecked, his measure's full
And ripe for harvest! See the maiden comes!
And with her sickle mows his proud hopes down.
Flat on the earth she lays his vast renown,
Which he had piled up to the very stars.
Tremble not, fly not! Ere the oaten stalk
Turns yellow, ere the moon has filled her horns,
No English horse, at the full-flowing stream
Of the majestic Loire, shall quench his thirst.

BERTRAND.

Alas, the reign of miracles is past!

JOANNA.

Their reign is not yet past, a milk-white dove
Shall soar, and with the eagle's boldness pounce
Upon these vultures that devour our land.
In fight will she bring down proud Burgundy,
His country's traitor, this ferocious Talbot,
Who with his hundred hands would scale the heavens,
This Salisbury, who our temples dares prophane,
And all these saucy islanders, like lambs,
Or timorous kidlings, will she drive before her.
The Lord, the God of battles nerves her arm,
His trembling chosen creature shall display
His awful power, a virgin's arm shall wield
His puissant sword, for he is King of Kings.

THIBAUT.

Why, sure the girl's possessed!

RAIMOND.

It is the helm,
Which fills her spirit with these warlike thoughts.
Look at your daughter! See! her eye balls glow
With lightnings, and her cheeks are flushed with fire.

JOANNA.

Shall this land fall! this land of old renown!
So beautiful a land the sun beholds not
In his eternal course; this paradise,
Which God loves as the apple of his eye,
Shall it bow down beneath a foreign yoke!
Here was the heathen power stayed. Here the cross
Was first upreared, a bleeding Saviour's form,
Here rest the ashes of the holy Lewis,
And from this land went forth the pious chief,
Who freed the Saviour's tomb from hands prophane.

BERTRAND *(astonished)*.

Hear how she talks! Whence did the girl receive
This mighty revelation? Father Arc,
A wonderous daughter God has given to you.

JOANNA.

What! shall the sceptre from our native kings
Depart? The anointed king, who never dies,
Shall he be ta'en from us? He, who protects
The sacred plough, and fertile makes the earth?
Who from oppression rescues his own people,
Who makes his cities flourish round his throne,
Affrights the wicked and defends the weak,

Who knows no envy, 'cause he is the highest,
And though a mortal, deals out heaven's mercy
Over the blood-stained earth.—For the king's throne,
Shining with gems and gold, is a sure refuge
To the forsaken; here united stand
Power and compassion, to abash the guilty,
And draw the good man confident towards it,
Who with the lion plays about the throne.
But, he, the king, who comes from foreign parts,
The holy bones of whose departed sires
Repose not in our land, how can he love us?
Who with our young men lived not in his youth,
To whom our speech no heartfelt music makes,
How can he be a father to his children?

THIBAUT.

May heaven protect our country and our king.
But we are peaceful folk, and know not how
To draw the sword, or rein the prancing steed.
Let us await in patience, till the fate
Of battle tells us who shall reign in France.
The chance of war is the decree of heaven,
And we must call him master, who receives
The holy ointment and the crown at Rheims.
Let's to our labour. Come, and let us think
Only on what is next us. Let the great,
The princes of this world contend for it.
We can in peace behold the mighty storm,
For firm-set is the earth, which our hands till.
Let flames our smoking villages destroy,
The war-horse trample on the ploughman's joy,

Soon with new crops the spring will glad our eyes,
And soon our huts will from their ruins rise.

[*All go off except the maid.*

JOANNA.

Farewell, ye mountains, ye beloved groves,
Ye dear and peaceful vallies, fare ye well!
No more Joanna roves your haunts among.
She bids you all a long and last farewell.
Ye meads, which I have watered oft, ye trees,
Which I have planted, bloom in freshest green
As ever, and thou echo, which so oft
Hast in this vale made answer to my songs,
Ne'er wilt thou list Joanna's voice again.

Ye scenes of all my dear and heart-felt joys,
I bid you all a long and last adieu,
Ye lambkins stray abroad, no shepherd's voice
Calls you to feed and sip the morning dew.

For I must now attend another flock,
So strongly does the holy spirit invite
To fields where squadrons join in horrid shock,
No call is this of sensual vain delight.

He, who to Moses once on Horeb's height
Flaming descended in the bush of fire,
And bade him shew the wonders of his might
To Egypt's king—he, who, to work his ire,

Chose for his champion Jesse's shepherd boy,—
He, who to shepherds ever hath displayed
His favour,—from these boughs thus spake to me,
" Go and show forth my power on earth, thou lowly
maid.

" A shining casque shall deck thy crested head,
" A plate of steel thy tender breast sustain,
" But ne'er let mortal man thy heart invade
" With sinful flames of love, earthly and vain.

" Ne'er shall thy locks with bridal flowers be crowned,
" No beauteous infant shall thy bosom press,
" But I will make thy name in arms renowned,
" And honoured far above thy sex's praise.

" And when in fight the stoutest hearts grow tame,
" And France strives faintly 'gainst the foeman's
power,
" Then shalt thou bear aloft my Oriflamme,
" And as the scythe mows down the grassy flower,

" So shalt thou lay the haughty conquerer low,
" Roll back his fortune's wheel with sudden bound;
" To thee shall France her great deliverance owe,
" By thee her king at holy Rheims be crowned."

Erewhile a sign was promised me, a helm
Is sent to me from heaven, it comes from Him,

With power divine it does my sense o'erwhelm,
And rouse in me the might of Cherubim.

Hence will I rush into the fields of war,
Where glows the combat on the ensanguined ground,
With mighty voice the trumpet calls from far,
The war-horse prances, and the clarions sound.

[*Exit.*

ACT I. SCENE I.

Court of King Charles at Chinon.

DUNOIS *and* DU CHATEL.

DUNOIS.

I can no longer bear it. I renounce
Henceforth this king, who thus forgets himself
And his own fame. My heart bleeds in my breast,
And my two eyes could weep hot scalding tears,
To see our royal country portioned out
By the fell spoiler's sword, our noble towns,
That grew up with the monarchy itself,
Give to the enemy's hand their rusty keys,
Whilst we, instead of flying to their help,
Dream out our days in indolent repose.
Hearing that Orleans was besieged, I haste
From the far-distant Normandy, in hopes
To find the king leading a gallant force;
And here I find him in the midst of jugglers,
Buffoons, and minstrels, solving curious riddles,
And giving gallant shews to his Sorel,
As if profoundest peace reigned in our land.
The constable has left us; sick at heart,

To see such monstrous folly, I too leave him,
And give him up a victim to his fate.

DU CHATEL.

Here comes the king.

Enter KING CHARLES.

CHARLES.

The constable returns his sword, and says
He means to serve no longer. Well! so be it.
He rids us of a troublesome peevish man,
Who only sought to rule us at his will.

DUNOIS.

In times like these a man is of some worth,
Nor would I part with him so easily.

CHARLES.

You tell me this from love of contradiction,
Whilst he was with us, you were ne'er his friend.

DUNOIS.

He was a proud, morose, and plaguy fool,
Who ne'er knew how to end. But, for this once,
He hits the mark; he judges well to leave
A cause, where no more honour's to be won.

CHARLES.

I see you have got into your pleasant mood,
I'll not disturb you in it. Du Chatel!
The old King Renè sends ambassadors
To greet us, noble masters of the song,
And far renowned. We must receive them well,

And to each one present a golden chain.
(To the Bastard). What is't you laugh at?

DUNOIS.

That these golden chains
Drop from your mouth so glibly.

DU CHATEL.

Sire! the gold
Is quite exhausted in your treasury.

CHARLES.

Then see and get some. Noble singers ne'er
Shall leave our court without their honoured meed.
'Tis they, who make our barren sceptre bud,
And weave the green unfading twig of life
Into the unfruitful circle of the crown.
High-reaching, they assume the state of kings,
On airy wishes they erect their thrones,
Their harmless kingdom to no space confined.
Then must the singer with the monarch go,
Both raised alike above this world of woe.

DU CHATEL.

My royal master, I have sought to spare
Thine ear, so long as means and help remained,
But stern necessity must loose my tongue.
—Nought now remains to thee to give—alas!
Thou canst not even supply to morrow's wants.
The spring-tide of thy life is passed away,
And lowest ebb is in thy treasury.
The troops remain unpaid, they murmur loud,
And threaten to withdraw. Scarcely I know

How to provide with merest necessaries
Thy royal house, reft of its princely state.

CHARLES.

Mortgage the royal duties, and thereon
Raise money from the Lombards.

DU CHATEL.

Gracious Sire!
The duties and revenues of the crown,
Three years to come, already have been pledged.

DUNOIS.

And so meantime both lands and pledge are lost.

CHARLES.

We still have left us many provinces
Blooming and fertile.

DUNOIS.

Aye, so long as heaven
And Talbot's sword shall please to leave us them.
When Orleans falls, then with thy dear King Renè
Mayest thou go tend the sheep-folds.

CHARLES.

Thy sharp wit
Is ever ready to fall on this king.
And yet this same land-lacking prince it was,
Who even to-day hath sent me costly gifts.

DUNOIS.

Forefend it heavens, he has not sent his crown
Of Naples! For I hear it may be had
Full cheap, since he has ta'en to pasture sheep.

CHARLES.

'Tis but a jest, a sort of festival,

Which to himself and his pure heart he gives,
Thus to create a pure and innocent world,
In this rough age of harsh realities.
It is the great wish of his royal mind,
Once more to introduce those good old times,
When virtue ruled the world, and passionate love
Of valourous knights roused to adventurous deeds,
And noble dames high arbitresses sate
To adjust each point of nicer argument.
The venerable man lives in those times,
And as they are depicted in old songs,
Like a celestial city in golden clouds,
He would transplant them to the earth. For this
He has established a court of love,
For the sojourn of noble knights; where dames,
High-born and chaste, might sit on gorgeous thrones,
Where purest flames might once more bless the heart;
And he has chosen me for the Prince of Love.

DUNOIS.

I am not yet so far degenerate,
As to despise love's gentle sovereign sway.
To him I owe my name and birth, and all,
That I inherit, lies in his domain.
My father was the Prince of Orleans,
Whom ne'er a female heart could long resist,
Nor fort embattled stand against his arms.
Wouldst thou deserve thy title "Prince of Love,"
Be thou the bravest of the brave. I've read
In those old books, that love was always paired
With knightly deeds, and heroes, so they teach,

Not piping swains, at the round table sate.
He, who in arms cannot defend the fair,
Does not deserve the glorious meed. Lo here
The field of combat! Fight then to maintain
Thy father's crown, with knightly sword defend
Thine, and the honour of the noble dames.
And when thou hast through streams of hostile blood
Redeemed the crown thy great forefathers wore,
Then will it well become thee, to intwine
The mirtle wreaths of love around thy brow.

CHARLES *(to a noble Page, who enters).*

What now, Sir!

PAGE.

Senators from Orleans crave
An audience.

CHARLES.

Lead them in. They crave my help,
Who am myself most helpless and forlorn.

Enter three Senators.

Welcome my brave and loyal burgesses.
How fares my noble city, Orleans?
Does she continue with her wonted spirit
To keep the foe at bay?

SENATOR.

Alas, my liege!
The city is in greatest strait, each hour
Appals us with the approach of some new danger.
The outworks are destroyed, at each assault

The enemy gains fresh ground, the battlements
Are left without defenders, for the troops
With daily sallies harass the besiegers,
And few return within the walls again.
Therefore the noble Count of Rochepierre,
Our brave commander, in this pressing strait,
According to old usage, has agreed
With the besiegers, to yield up the town
On the twelfth day, if no sufficient force
Within that space appear to raise the siege.

[DUNOIS *makes a violent motion of anger.*

CHARLES.

The respite's short.

SENATOR.

And hither are we come,
Under the enemy's conduct, to implore
Thy princely heart to pity our distress,
And in this interval to send us help,
Else on the twelfth day must the city yield.

DUNOIS.

And could Saintrailles too sanction with his voice
A treaty so disgraceful?

SENATOR.

No, my Lord.
Were that brave man alive, no one had dared
To talk of treaty with the enemy.

DUNOIS.

Is he then dead?

SENATOR.

Upon our lofty walls,
Fighting in his king's cause, the hero fell.

CHARLES.

Saintrailles is dead! Oh! in that single man
I lose a host.

[*A knight comes and speaks some words in a low tone to the Bastard, who exclaims with surprize.*

DUNOIS.

And that too!

CHARLES.

Well! what now?

DUNOIS.

Earl Douglas sends to say, the Scottish troops
Have mutinied and threaten to withdraw,
If their arrears are not forthwith discharged.

CHARLES.

Du Chatel!

DU CHATEL *(shrugs his shoulders).*

Sire! I have no means to help.

CHARLES.

Promise them, pledge them half of my domains.

DUNOIS.

It nought avails.—They have already been
Too oft amused with barren promises.

CHARLES.

They are the flower of all my troops—Oh, heavens!
They shall not now desert me, not just now.

SENATOR *(stamps on the ground).*

O king! for pity's sake, think of our need!

CHARLES.

Can I then call forth armies from the ground,
By stamping on it? Does the yellow corn
Blossom within the hollow of my hand?
Tear me in pieces, take my bleeding heart,
And stamp it into coin. My blood is yours,—
Money and soldiers have I none to give.

[*He sees* SOREL *come in, and runs with outstretched arms to meet her.*

Enter AGNES SOREL, *with a casket in her hand.*

CHARLES.

My life! my Agnes! dearest, best-beloved!
Thou comest in time to save me from despair.
While yet I fold thee in these tender arms,
All is not lost, my Agnes still is mine.

SOREL.

My dearest Lord!

[*Looking round with anxious enquiring look.*

Du Chatel! is it true?
Dunois?

DU CHATEL.

Alas!

SOREL.

And is the need so great?
Do the troops mutiny for want of pay?

DU CHATEL.

It is, alas! too true.

SOREL *(pressing the casket upon him).*

Here! here is gold!
Here are my jewels! melt my silver down,
Sell all, mortgage my castles—borrow loans
On my estates in Provence—turn it all
To money—that the troops be satisfied.
Away, away! and let no time be lost.

[*She drives him out.*

CHARLES.

Now Dunois! now Du Chatel! am I poor,
When I possess this pearl above all price,
This first of women? She is nobly born,
As I myself, not Valois' royal house
Can boast a purer blood, she would adorn
The first throne in the world,—but she disdains
The splendid boon, it is her only wish
To bear the humbler title of my love.
Ne'er from my hand would she a gift receive
Of higher price, than in the wintry month,
Some early flower or rarer fruit. From me
She takes no present, and she gives me all.
Her whole possessions nobly she devotes,
To prop the sinking fortunes of my house.

DUNOIS.

Yes, for she is as mad as thou thyself;
She throws her all into a burning house,
And dips a leaky bucket in the well.

Thee will she never save, but plunge herself
With thee into the gulph.

SOREL.

Believe him not!
Ten times for thy sake has he risked his life,
And chides me now, because I risk my gold.
Have I not freely given thee what the world
Holds of more worth than gold and precious stones,
And shall I now withhold my sordid pelf?
Come! let us throw away all needless shew
Of costly state, from my example learn
To bid farewell to luxury and pomp.
Convert thy courtiers into fighting men,
Thy gold to iron, resolutely throw
All that thou hast away to win thy crown.
Come to the field! Together let us share
Danger and toil, together let us mount
The barbed steed, and to the burning sun
Expose our tender bodies, let the clouds
Be to us for a canopy, the stone
Pillow our sleeping heads. His own hard lot
The rugged soldier will with patience bear,
When, like the meanest peasant in his camp,
He sees his king encounter want and toil.

CHARLES *(smiling)*.

Yes, now begins to dawn the accomplishment
Of an old saying, which, in prophetic mood,
A nun at Clermont uttered in mine ear;—
'Twas thus her promise ran, a woman's arm,
She said, would make me victor o'er my foes,

And place upon my brow the diadem.
I sought her far amid the hostile camp,
Hoping to appease my angry mother's heart.
Here stands the heroine, who to Rheims will lead me,
And I shall conquer through my Agnes' love.

SOREL.

The swords of your brave friends will win your battles.

CHARLES.

I hope much too from discord in their camp,
For I have sure intelligence, that all
Is not so fair as formerly, between
These haughty Lords of England, and my cousin
Of Burgundy. I therefore have dispatched
La Hire, with soothing message to the Duke,
To try if I can win this angry peer
Back to his ancient truth and loyalty;
And every hour I look for his return.

DU CHATEL *(at the window)*.

The knight even now within the court alights.

CHARLES.

Most welcome messenger! soon shall we learn
Whether henceforth we conquer or retreat.

Enter LA HIRE.

(Going to meet him). La Hire, what news? May we encourage hope?
Oh, tell me! how did he receive my message?

LA HIRE.

First he demands, before he lends an ear

To the proposals, that thou shouldst give up
Du Chatel, whom he calls his father's murderer.

CHARLES.

And do we hesitate these glorious terms?

LA HIRE.

Then break the pact, ere it be ratified.

CHARLES.

And hast thou done as I commanded thee,
Called him to single combat on the bridge
At Montereau, on which his father fell.

LA HIRE.

I threw my gauntlet down before his face,
Saying, thou wouldst abate thy dignity,
And as a simple knight fight for thy crown.
Then thus he answered me; he has no need
To fight for that, which he already wears.
But if his heart to combat be inclined,
At Orleans he will find me, where I mean
To be to-morrow: and therewith he laughed,
And turned his back upon me.

CHARLES.

Was no voice
Raised in the parliament, to plead the cause
Of truth and justice?

LA HIRE.

No, her voice was drowned
By party rage, the parliament decreed,
That thou and thine had forfeited the crown.

DUNOIS.

See now the pride of citizens turned kings!

CHARLES.

Didst thou not try to soothe my mother's wrath?

LA HIRE.

Thy mother's wrath?

CHARLES.

What said she, as you heard?

LA HIRE *(after considering some moments).*

Just then as I arrived at St. Denys,
A crowd of idle gazers thronged the streets,
To see the crown placed on the royal brow.
All Paris was arrayed in costliest garb,
And in the streets triumphal arcs were reared,
Through which the King of England passed in state.
The way was strewn with flowers, and as if France
Had gained some glorious victory, the mob
With joyous clamours crowded round his car.

SOREL.

Did they so joy to tread upon the heart
Of their own true and loving king?

LA HIRE.

I saw
Harry of Lancaster, the royal boy,
Upon the sacred seat of holy Lewis,
Bedford and Gloucester, his two uncles, near him,
While the Duke Philip knelt before the throne,
And took the oath of fealty for his lands.

CHARLES.

Oh, false disloyal peer! unworthy cousin!

LA HIRE.

The child was frighted, and as up the steps

He mounted to the throne, stumbled and fell.
A luckless omen! cried the gaping crowd,
And peels of laughter echoed through the streets.
Then came the aged queen, thy mother, forth,
And—I am horror-struck to say it—

CHARLES.

Well!

LA HIRE.

She took the child up in her arms, and placed him,
With her own hands, upon thy father's seat.

CHARLES.

O mother! mother!

LA HIRE.

Even the savage bands
Of Burgundy, inured to war and blood,
Reddened with shame, as they beheld the sight.
She guessed their thoughts, and turning to the people,
Exclaimed aloud, "Frenchmen, for this thank me,
"That with a purer scion I replace
"The old and worn-out stem, and save you from
"A crack-brained father's misbegotten son."

[*The King covers his face;* AGNES *runs up to him and locks him in her arms. All the by-standers express horror and amazement.*

DUNOIS.

She-wolf abhorred! detested, foulest fiend!

CHARLES *(after a pause, to the Senators).*

Sirs, you have heard how matters stand with us.
Tarry no longer here, go back to Orleans,
And tell my faithful city, from her oath

Of fealty I release her, let her seek
To make terms with the enemy, let her sue
For mercy to the Duke of Burgundy,
They call him good, he will be merciful.

DUNOIS.

How, Sire! and would you give up Orleans?

SENATOR *(kneels down)*.

My royal master! do not draw thy hand
Away from us, give not thy city up
To England's harsh dominion; for she is
A jewel in thy crown, and none has served
The kings thy great forefathers with such zeal
As thy true Orleans.

DUNOIS.

Have they beaten us?
And must we quit the field, before a blow
Be struck for Orleans? Wouldst thou give away
With one light word, ere blood be shed for her,
This first of cities, from the heart of France?

CHARLES.

Enough of blood, alas! has flowed in vain.
I feel the hand of heaven lie heavy on me.
In every battle are my troops defeated.
My parliament disowns me, and my people
Receive my rival in the capital.
With shouts and jubilee, my next of kin
Forsake, betray me; even my mother feeds,
At her own breasts, the foreign hostile brood.
—We must retreat to yonder side the Loire,

And yield to heaven's all powerful hand, which fights
For these proud islanders.

SOREL.

Forbid it heaven,
That we despairing of our cause, should turn
Our backs upon this kingdom! Such a word
From thy brave breast ne'er issued. The fell deed
Of the unnatural mother has cast down
My king's heroic spirit.—Soon this cloud
Will pass away, thou'lt be thyself again,
And bear with noble heart against the blows
Of fate, which now vents on thee all her spite.

CHARLES *(lost in gloomy thought)*.

Is it not true? A dark and gloomy fate
Hangs o'er the race of Valois? Sure it is
Accursed of God; the mother's hateful deeds
Have called from hell the furies on our house.
For twenty years, my father's reason lay
Eclipsed in night, three elder brothers went
Before me to the tomb, heaven has decreed
The house of the sixth Charles shall cease to be.

SOREL.

In thee 'twill bloom in freshest youth again.
Have but more confidence. Oh! not in vain
Has heaven bestowed on thee a happier lot,
Than on thy brothers, and though youngest-born,
Called thee to sit on an unhoped-for throne.
In thy soft nature heaven prepares the means
To heal the wounds, which party rage inflicts
On this unhappy land. The angry flames

Of civil war wilt thou assuage—my heart
Tells me thou wilt—affrighted peace restore,
And found anew our ancient monarchy.

CHARLES.

Oh! no. These rough and stormy times demand
A stronger arm to ply the helm. I might
In peaceful times have formed my people's bliss,
But this wild uproar quite o'ercrows my spirit.
Those hearts, which are against me locked in hate,
I ne'er can open with the sword.

SOREL.

Alas!
The people are beguiled, desperate conceits
Have crazed their senses, but this horrid dream
Will pass away; soon will the day arrive,
When love and duty to their rightful king
Will bloom afresh, the ancient jealousy
And hate revive, which with eternal strife
Divides two rival nations. The proud foe
By his own prosperous fortune is o'erthrown.
Be not too hasty then to quit the field
Of combat, fight for every inch of ground,
Defend this Orleans, as if thine own life
Were set upon the cast. Rather destroy
All ferry-boats and burn the bridges down,
Which would convey thee in inglorious flight
Across the Stygian waters of the Loire.

CHARLES.

All that I could, I've done. My royal self
In personal fight I've offered for my crown.

The foe declines the challenge. Why in vain
Should I in battle spend my people's blood,
And see my noble cities sink in dust?
Why should I, like the unnatural mother, wish
To see my child divided with the sword?
No, I renounce it, to preserve its life.

DUNOIS.

How, Sire! do words like these beseem a king?
And is a crown so lightly thrown away?
When civil war unfurls her bloody flag,
The people's lives and fortunes are the sport
Of each unworthiest, who, with glozing words
Clothed in the garb of reason, can seduce
Their hearts to serve his party zeal and hate.
The husbandman forsakes his plough, the wife
Her distaff, children, old men fly to arms:
The infuriate citizen with fire destroys
The town which gave him birth, the countryman
Tramples the crops, which his own hands had sown,
To serve thee with his love or party-hate,
And what his heart desires, assert by deeds.
When honour calls, when for his fancied Gods
Or cherished idols, he to combat flies,
The soft-tongued voice of mercy pleads in vain
To stay the uplifted sword; he neither grants
Or sues for quarter. Cease then this parade
Of pity, which so ill becomes a king.
Let the war rage its fill, 'twas not thy breath
Which lightly stirred its flames. The people's blood
Should for their monarch freely flow. This law

Is heaven's decree, to which a kindred pulse
Responsive beats in every Frenchman's heart.
That nation is most abject, which demurs,
When honour gives command, to stake their all,
Wealth, fortune, life, upon the desperate cast.

CHARLES *(to the Senators).*

Expect no further answer. God be wi' you.
I can no more.

DUNOIS.

So may from this time forth
The God of battles turn his back on thee,
As thou upon thy father's throne. Thou hast
Thyself forsaken, so forsake I thee.
Not England leagued with Burgundy, thine own
Faint-hearted spirit hurls thee from the throne.
The kings of France are heroes from their birth,
But thou begotten of unwarlike blood.
(To the Senators). Your king forsakes you. I will
throw myself
Into my native city, Orleans,
And in its heapy ruins find a tomb.

SOREL *(to the King).*

Oh! let him not go thus in wrath away!
His mouth speaks harsh words, but his heart is true
As gold, he is the self-same Dunois still,
Who warmly loves and oft has bled for thee.
Come, Dunois! come, acknowledge, that the heat
Of noble scorn has carried you too far.
And thou forgive thy friend his hasty speech.
Nay, come, come! let me quickly join your hearts,

Ere fatal discord, like a fiend from hell,
Plant in them rage and inextinguished hate.

[DUNOIS *fixes his eyes upon the King, and appears to expect an answer.*

CHARLES *(to* DU CHATEL*).*

Go we across the Loire. Command that all
My necessaries be embarked.

DUNOIS *(quick to* SOREL*).*

Farewell!

[*Turns quickly and goes out: the Senators follow.*

SOREL *(wrings her hands in despair).*

Ah! if he goes, we are indeed forlorn!
—Follow him, La Hire; Oh! try to soften him.

[*Exit* LA HIRE.

CHARLES.

Is then the crown the only good on earth?
And does it cost such pangs to part with it?
Yes, there is one thing harder to be borne;
To feel one-self o'er-mastered, to depend
Upon the favour of these haughty vassals.
Aye, there's the sting, which frets the noble heart,
Harder to bear than fortune's roughest blow.

[*To* DU CHATEL, *who yet delays.*

Do, as I gave command.

DU CHATEL *(throws himself at his feet).*

My gracious liege!

CHARLES.

It is decided, I will hear no more,

DU CHATEL.

Make peace with the proud Duke of Burgundy.
Else do I see no hope.

CHARLES.

You counsel this!
And by your blood the treaty must be sealed.

DU CHATEL.

Here is my head: full oft in bloody fight
Has it been ventured for your sake; and now
For you I freely lay it on the block.
Content the Duke. Oh! give me up to meet
The full tide of his rage, my streaming blood
Shall satiate his deep-rooted enmity.

CHARLES *(looks at him a long time in silent emotion).*

And is it true? Are things so ill with me,
That my best friends, who see my inmost soul,
Point out my safety through the paths of shame.
Aye, now I feel indeed how low I've fallen,
No longer in my honour they confide.

DU CHATEL.

Consider well—

CHARLES.

No more—incense me not.
And should I turn my back upon ten thrones,
With my friend's life I would not purchase them.
—Do, as I did command you—go and see
That all my warlike stores be put on board.

DU CHATEL.

It shall be done. [*Exit.*

CHARLES *(taking* AGNES SOREL'S *hand)*.

Be not so sad, my Agnes,
It still is France on yonder side the Loire.
We go into a happier land! there laughs
A milder sky, no louring clouds deform
Its smiling face, but gentler zephyrs breathe,
And softer murmurs wait us: there abide
The joyous songs and graces, yonder blooms
The flush of life and love without alloy.

SOREL.

And am I doomed to see this luckless day?
Must the king droop in exile, must the son
Wander an outcast from his father's house,
And leave the cradle of his infancy?
Oh! land of dear delights! thee we forsake,
Nor shall we e'er with joy see thee again.
(To LA HIRE, *who returns)*. You come alone, you bring him not with you.
(Looking at him nearer). How now, La Hire! your looks seem big with news.
Some new mischance has happed!

LA HIRE.

The storms of fate
Have spent their shafts, and sunshine gleams again.

SOREL.

What is't, I pray you?

LA HIRE *(to the King)*.

Call the messengers
From Orleans back again!

CHARLES.

Wherefore? what now?

LA HIRE.

Bid them come back. Thy fate has ta'en a turn.
A battle has been fought; the victory thine.

SOREL.

Victory! Oh, heavenly music in the word!

CHARLES.

La Hire! unfounded rumours have abused
Thine ears. I ne'er will dream of victory more.

LA HIRE.

Far greater wonders yet remain behind.
Here comes the Archbishop, and he leads along
The noble Bastard to thine arms again.

SOREL.

Oh! sweetest fruit of victory! which, like
The blessed bread of heaven, brings in its train
Friends reconciled and peace.

Enter the Archbishop of Rheims, DUNOIS, DU CHATEL, *with* RAOUL, *a Knight in armour.*

ARCHBISHOP.

Princes embrace.
Banish all strife and rancour from your breasts,
Since heaven itself at last declares for us.

[DUNOIS *embraces the King.*

CHARLES.

I'm rapt in wonder and astonishment.

What means this solemn greeting? what has wrought
This sudden change?

ARCHBISHOP *(brings the Knight forward, and places him before the King).*

Speak to his Majesty.

RAOUL.

Lately we mustered sixteen companies,
Men of Lorraine, to join them to thy host,
And Baudricour, the knight from Vaucouleurs,
Led our battalions. When we reached the heights
By Vermanton, and thence into the vale
Descended, which the Yonne bathes with his streams,
There in an open plain before us stood,
In battailous array, the banded foe,
And, as we backward turned, a grove of spears
Gleamed from behind us. Thus, on either side,
We saw our ranks close hemmed between two hosts,
Nor hope remained of conquest or escape.
Then sank the bravest hearts, and in despair
Each man would throw his useless arms away.
And as the leaders from each other's breast
Counsel and consolation vainly sought,
Behold a wonder to our gazing eyes
Sudden revealed! Forth from the mazy wood
A virgin form appeared, with helmed head,
Like war's stern goddess, beautiful at once
And terrible to look on; down her neck
Her hair in darkening ringlets flowed; a glance
Of light from heaven around her seemed to play,
As thus she raised her voice. "Why bravest Franks,

" Why stand ye thus dismayed? On! to the foe!
" And were his numbers more than the sea-sands,
" God and the holy virgin leads you on."
Then quickly from the standard-bearer's hand
She wrenched the standard, and before the troops,
With haughty step, the mighty virgin trod.
We mute with wonder follow, though afraid,
The lofty standard, then upon the foe
We rushed impetuous. They astonied stood,
Bereft of motion, with wide-staring eyes
Gazing upon the wonder—then, at once,
As if the terrors of the avenging God
Had struck their hearts, betake themselves to flight.
Down dropped their idle arms, and o'er the field
Dispersed, disbanded, strayed their fear-struck host.
Nor general's voice, nor word of stern command,
Could check their course, but senseless and amazed,
Nor daring to look backward, man and horse
Plunge in the foaming stream. Our busy swords
Without resistance plied the work of death,
No battle, but mere butchery. On the field
Two thousand corpses tell the deeds of blood,
Besides the numbers whom the stream devoured.
On our side, not one man was killed or harmed.

CHARLES.

By heavens! 'tis strange, most strange and wonderful!

SOREL.

You say a maiden did these wonderous deeds?
Whence came she? and who is she?

RAOUL.

Who she is,
To the king's ear alone will she reveal.
She calls herself a prophetess, from heaven
Sent to deliver France, and promises,
Before the moon has filled her horns, to drive
The English with disgrace from Orleans.
The people trust her words, and thirst for battle.
She's with the troops and soon must she be here.

A peal of bells is heard, and a rattling of arms striking against each other.

Hear you the uproar and the peal of bells?
'Tis she, the people greet the prophetess.

CHARLES.

Du Chatel lead her in.
(To the Archbishop). What should I think?
A maiden brings me victory, when nought else
But heaven's own arm could save me from despair.
Such things as these are out of nature's course,
And dare we, bishop, trust in miracles?

MANY VOICES *(behind the scene).*

Hail to the maiden! the deliverer!

CHARLES.

She comes! Here Dunois take my place awhile.
Let's try this wonderous maiden, if in truth
Her mission is from heaven, the Holy Spirit
Will teach her to discover the true king.

[DUNOIS *sits down, the King stands on his right hand, near him* AGNES SOREL, *the*

Archbishop with the rest opposite, so that the middle space remains empty.

Enter JOANNA, *accompanied by the Senators and many Knights, who fill up the back-ground of the scene. She steps forward with a noble carriage, and looks at the surrounding company in succession.*

DUNOIS *(after a deep and solemn pause).*

Art thou the wonderous maiden, whose brave arm—

JOANNA *(interrupting him).*

Bastard of Orleans! Wilt thou tempt the Lord!
Rise from this place which suits thee not. I come
From heaven commissioned to this greater man.

[*She goes with decided step to the King, bends the knee before him, and immediately rises, stepping backwards. All the by-standers express their astonishment.* DUNOIS *quits his seat, and a space is left vacant before the King.*

CHARLES.

Thou seest my face to-day, for the first time.
How is it that thou knowest me?

JOANNA.

Thee I saw,
When no man's eye saw thee, save God alone.

[*She approaches to the King, and speaks mysteriously.*

Last night, bethink thee, when in deepest sleep
Intranced all thy attendants round thee lay,

Leaving thy couch thou didst in fervent prayer
Pour out thy soul before the throne of God.
Let these depart, and I will name to thee,
What thou didst ask in prayer.

CHARLES.

What I to heaven
Confided, need I not conceal from men.
If thou canst tell me, what in prayer I sought,
Doubtless thou art by heaven itself inspired.

JOANNA.

To God thou didst prefer these three requests,
And mark me, Dauphin, if I name them right.
First thou didst pray to heaven, if ill-got wealth
Stick to the crown, or other heavy crime,
As yet unexpiated, from the days
Of thy forefathers, have stirred up this sad
And lamentable war, to accept thyself
An offering for thy people, and pour out,
Upon thy head alone, the bitter cup
Of vengeance.

CHARLES *(steps back astonished).*

Ha! who art thou, mighty being?
Whence hadst thou power to read my secret thoughts?

JOANNA.

Next, thou didst ask of heaven this second grace.
If it were God's high will and stern decree
To wrest the sceptre from thy race, and take
From thee all that thy royal ancestors,
The sovereign monarchs of this realm, possessed,
Thou prayedst three blessings only he would grant,

A mind contented, with itself at peace,
True-hearted friendship, and thy Agnes' love.

[*The King hides his face, and weeps vehemently; great astonishment among the bystanders. After a pause.*

And shall I also name thy third request?

CHARLES.

Enough! I do believe. No mortal man
Can speak as thou dost. Heaven inspires thy tongue.

ARCHBISHOP.

Say, holy, wonderous maid, what happy spot
Has given thee birth, and who thy parents are,
Favoured of God so highly, who begat thee.

JOANNA.

Most reverend Lord, Joanna is my name,
I'm but the lowly daughter of a swain,
Who dwells in my king's village, Dom Remi,
I'th' bishopric of Toul: where from the days
Of childhood have I kept my father's flocks.
And oft times did I hear men tell the tale
Of yon proud islanders, who o'er the sea
Have come to make us slaves, and bend our necks
Beneath the sceptre of a foreign Lord,
Who does not love his people, and that they had
Already seized on our great city, Paris,
And mastered all the kingdom. Then with sighs
And tears I to the Holy Virgin prayed,
To turn from us the shame of foreign chains,
And give us to our home-born king again.
Before the village where I lived, there stood,

From times long past, an image of the Virgin,
By pious pilgrims oft times visited.
And hard-by stood a holy oak, far-famed
For blessed miracles: under its shade
I loved to sit and muse, tending my sheep.
And if a lamb among the mountain wilds
Was lost, a dream shewed always where it was,
Sure as I fell asleep under that tree.
And one time as I sat a long night through,
Under the tree, with prayer and thoughts devout,
Shaking off sleep, descending from her place,
Before mine eyes the Holy Virgin stood,
Bearing a sword and standard, in all else
Clad like a shepherdess, and thus she spake.
"'Tis I. Arise Joanna, leave thy flocks,
"The Lord of Heaven calls thee to other fields.
"Take thou this standard! gird thee with this sword.
"Destroy with it my people's foes, and lead
"To Rheims the Lord's own son, and on his brows
"Plant thou the crown his great forefathers wore."
I answered lowly thus, "How shall I dare,
"A tender maiden, such adventurous deeds,
"Unused to wield the sword in bloody fight."
But she replied, "A pure and holy maid
"Can bring on earth each glorious thing to pass,
"If she resist the flames of earthly love.
"Lo I! like thee, a chaste and holy maid,
"Have been the mother of the Lord of Heaven,
"And I myself am heavenly." Then she touched
Mine eyelids, and I upwards looked, and lo!

The heaven was full of angel-babes, who bore
White lilies in their hands, and dulect sounds
Of heavenly harps were wafted through the air.
Thus for three nights together, 'fore mine eyes
The Virgin stood and called, "Joanna rise!
"The Lord of Heaven calls thee to other fields."
And on the third night, as she shewed herself,
She spake in angry tone these words severe.
"To obey is woman's duty upon earth,
"Hard suffering is her heavy lot, she must
"By services severe be purified.
"She, who has served on earth, is great in heaven."
As thus she spake, her simple shepherd's dress
Fell from her, and the glorious Queen of Heaven,
Decked in the brightness of a thousand suns,
Before me stood confessed; a golden cloud
Received her, as she upwards winged her flight,
Slowly ascending to the realms of bliss.

[*All are deeply moved;* AGNES SOREL, *weeping violently, hides her face in the King's bosom.*

ARCHBISHOP *(after a long silence).*

Such heavenly proofs must silence every doubt
Of earthly wisdom. That she speaks the truth
Her actions plainly shew, for God alone
Can do such wonderous works.

DUNOIS.

'Tis not her deeds,
Her eye, and the pure innocence, which speaks
In her sweet face, compel me to believe.

CHARLES.

Do I, unrighteous, merit such a grace?
All-searching, omnipresent eye, thou seest
My inmost soul, and knowest its humbleness.

JOANNA.

The humble great are the beloved of God.
Thou bowest thyself, and therefore doth he raise thee.

CHARLES.

And shall I then withstand my enemies?

JOANNA.

France will I lay subjected at thy feet.

CHARLES.

And Orleans, saidst thou, shall not be subdued.

JOANNA.

Sooner the Loire run backward to its source.

CHARLES.

Thou sayest, I shall in triumph march to Rheims.

JOANNA.

Thither I'll lead thee through a thousand foes.

[*All the Knights, who are present, make a noise with their lances and shields, and seem full of spirit.*

DUNOIS.

Please you, my liege, to place her at our head,
We'll blindly follow where she leads. Her eye
Prophetic shall conduct us, and this sword
Protect her in the dangerous ranks of war.

LA HIRE.

Not all the world in arms shall make us quail,
If she to battle lead our squadrons on;

The God of victory combats at her side.
Quick! let the mighty maid lead us to battle.

CHARLES.

Go, holy maiden, lead mine armies forth,
The generals shall obey thy voice. This sword
Of mightiest power in battle, which in wrath
Our crown field-marshal sent us back, hath found
A worthier hand. Receive it, holy maid,
And be henceforth—

JOANNA.

Not so, my royal liege,
Not by this weapon of terrestrial power
Shall my king gain the victory. I know
Another sword, which I must wield in fight.
I will describe it to thee, as the Spirit
Has taught me: send and cause it to be brought.

CHARLES.

Name it, Joanna.

JOANNA.

Let a messenger
Be straight dispatched to the old town of Fierboys.
There in St. Catherine's church-yard is a vault,
Stored with old arms, trophies of victory,
Won in the days of yore. Beneath the pile,
Lies hid the sword, which I in fight must use.
Three golden lilies stampt upon its blade
Denote it from the rest. Let this be brought,
And with it shalt thou triumph o'er thy foes.

CHARLES.

Send hence, and let them do as she has said.

JOANNA.

And give a milk-white standard to my hand,
Bound with a purple border. On its field,
The Queen of Heaven and beauteous Holy Babe,
Hovering above a globe, must be pourtrayed.
For so the holy mother did command.

CHARLES.

It shall be as thou sayest.

JOANNA.

Most reverend bishop,
Lay on my head your priestly hand, and speak
A blessing on your daughter. [*Kneels down.*

ARCHBISHOP.

Thou art come
A blessing to impart, not to receive.
"Go in the power of God;" we are unworthy.

NOBLE PAGE *(enters)*.

A herald comes, sent from the English camp.

JOANNA.

Let him come in, for God hath sent him hither.
[*Upon a sign from the King, the Page goes out.*

Enter a Herald.

CHARLES.

Speak thy commission, herald.

HERALD.

Is there here
One, who for Charles of Valois, Count of Ponthieu,
Can give an answer to my English master?

DUNOIS.

Out on thee! thou dishonourable herald!
Darest thou with bare-faced impudence disown
The title of the king on his own ground?
Thy coat of arms protects thee, else thou shouldst—

HERALD.

France recognizes but one king, and he
Lives in the English camp.

CHARLES.

Cousin, be calm.
Proclaim thy business, herald, who hath sent thee?

HERALD.

The noble Salisbury, grieving for the blood
Which has already flowed, and yet must flow,
Holds in the sheath his warriors' swords, and ere
Orleans be ta'en by storm, commands my mouth
To offer terms of compromise.

CHARLES.

Say on!

JOANNA *(stepping forward)*.

Sire! in thy stead, grant, that I speak with him.

CHARLES.

So be't, decide thou whether peace or war.

JOANNA.

Herald, who sends thee hither to speak with us?

HERALD.

The English general, Earl of Salisbury.

JOANNA.

Herald, thou liest! he speaks not by thy mouth.
'Tis not the dead, the living only speak.

HERALD.

My general lives in freshest health and strength,
He lives to crush you all.

JOANNA.

Aye, he did live,
When thou departedst. But a shot from Orleans
Stretched him this morning breathless on the field,
As from the tower la Tournelle he looked down.
—Thou laughest, because I tell thee what has happed
In place remote, if thou wilt not believe
My words, trust thine own eyes, his funeral pomp
Will meet thee, as thou homewards journeyest.
Now, herald, speak and tell thine errand hither.

HERALD.

If thou canst tell all secret things, thou knowest
My message, ere my mouth has given it breath.

JOANNA.

I reck not of thy message, but do thou
Hear mine, and mark me, carry back my words
To those thy chieftains, who have sent thee hither,
—Monarch of England, and ye noble Dukes,
Bedford and Glo'ster, who lay waste this land!
Make your account to the great King of Heaven,
For blood which ye have shed, and furthermore
Give up forthwith the keys of all the cities,
Which ye by godless violence have ta'en.
The maiden comes from heaven to offer you
The olive branch of peace, or bloody war.
Choose then! But hear my words, and mark them
well!

Not unto you this blooming land of France
Is destined by the Holy Mary's son,
But Charles, the rightful Lord and Dauphin, he,
To whom high heaven has given the heritage,
Will march to Paris in triumphant pomp,
Girt with his noble vassals and grandees.
Now, herald, go, and speed thee on thy way,
But ere thy feet can reach the English camp,
To bear the news, the virgin will be there,
And plant her banners on the walls of Orleans.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

A scene bordered by rocks.

Enter TALBOT *and* LIONEL, *English Generals;* PHILIP, *Duke of Burgundy; the Knights* FASTOLF *and* CHATILLON, *with soldiers and banners.*

TALBOT.

Here, let us halt under these rocks, and draw
Intrenchments round us, if we may perchance
Collect the straggling fugitives, who fled
In the first moment of alarm. Dispose
Strong outposts and secure the mountain heights.
The shades of night protect us from pursuit,
And if the foe is not upborne on wings,
I fear not his attack. Yet have we need
To use our utmost caution, for we have
To deal with a bold foe, and we are beaten.

[FASTOLF *goes away with the soldiers.*

LIONEL.

How general! beaten! name not such a word.
I'll ne'er believe that yon French starveling rogues
Have seen to-day the backs of Englishmen.
Oh, Orleans! Orleans! grave of our renown!
Old England's honour has before thy walls

Been wrecked! Oh base and laughable defeat!
Who will in after-times believe the tale!
The conquerors of Cressy, Poitiers,
And Agincourt, were by a woman chased!

BURGUNDY.

We have this comfort still: we were not beaten
By mortal men, but by the devil himself.

TALBOT.

You mean our devilish folly! How, Burgundy?
And does this ghost, that scares the vulgar herd,
Frighten our chieftains? This religious awe
Is but a paltry cloak for cowardice.
Your people fled the first.

BURGUNDY.

Why, no one stood,
The flight was general.

TALBOT.

Nay, my Lord, your wing
First turned their backs. You rushed into the camp
And cried aloud "All hell is broken loose,
"And fights for France," and so you threw the rest
Into disorder.

LIONEL.

This you can't deny;
Your wing first broke.

BURGUNDY.

'Cause they attacked us first.

TALBOT.

The maiden knew full well our weakest part,
And where to find the cowards.

BURGUNDY.

Why must I
Bear all the blame of this unlucky chance?

LIONEL.

Our English troops, had they but fought alone,
By heavens! would soon have conquered Orleans.

BURGUNDY.

Not so—for then you ne'er would have seen Orleans!
Who paved the way into this realm for you,
And stretched a friendly hand, when you debarked
Upon this foreign hostile shore; who crowned
Your Henry in the capital, and won
The hearts of Frenchmen over to his side?
By heavens! had not this strong and mighty arm
Brought you into this land, you ne'er had seen
The smoke ascend from a French chimney's top.

LIONEL.

If great and swelling words could do the feat,
You Duke, alone, would have subdued all France.

BURGUNDY.

You're out of humour, because Orleans
Has slipt your grasp, and now you vent your spleen
On me your friend and ally. Why did Orleans
Slip from your hands, but for your greediness?
They were disposed to yield the town to me,
Had not your envious spirit hindered it.

TALBOT.

'Twas not for you we did besiege the town.

BURGUNDY.

What could you do, had I withdrawn my troops.

LIONEL.

Not worse, believe me, than at Agincourt,
Where you and all the power of France fled from us.

BURGUNDY.

Yet did you gladly seize our proffered aid,
And dearly did the invader purchase it.

TALBOT.

Aye, dearly have we this day paid for it,
Disgraced and beaten before Orleans.

BURGUNDY.

No more of this, my Lord—else you may rue it.
Did I for this desert my rightful king,
And bring upon my head the name of traitor,
To hear such language from a foreigner?
Why should I thus bear arms against my country?
If I must serve, where I can reap no thanks,
My rightful king shall have my services.

TALBOT.

You have had secret dealings with the Dauphin,
We know it well, but we will find the means
To counteract your treachery.

BURGUNDY.

Death and hell!
These words to me! Chatillon! bid my people
Prepare to march. We will return forthwith
To our own land. [*Exit* CHATILLON.

LIONEL.

A prosperous journey to you!
Ne'er did old England shine so bright in arms,
As when we trusted to our own good swords,

And fought without the aid of treacherous friends.
Let each fight his own battle, for they say,
French blood and English ne'er can kindly mix.

Enter ISABELLE, *attended by a Page.*

ISABELLE.

Why how now, generals! Have my ears heard true?
Some planet sure of brain-disturbing power
Has crazed your sounder judgment. When nought else
But union can preserve us, would you part
In bitterness and hate, and kindling war
Against yourselves, make your destruction sure.
—I do beseech you, noble Duke, recal
The hasty order, and you, far-famed Talbot,
Appease the wrath of your incensed friend.
Come, Lionel, help me to apply the words
Of reconcilement to these fiery spirits.

LIONEL.

Not I in faith, 'tis all alike to me.
I care not for their feuds. And in my mind,
When folks cannot agree, 'tis best to part.

ISABELLE.

What! does the juggling fiend, who in the shock
Of battle smote us sore, work also here
To fool our senses with his hellish cheats?
Who was't began the strife? Speak—noble Lord,
(*To* TALBOT). Did you, forgetting your best interests,
Wound with harsh words the feelings of your friend?

What would you do without his aiding arm?
'Twas he, who placed your king upon the throne,
Whence he can hurl him at his will, his troops
Strengthen your cause, his powerful name yet more.
Not England, should she pour forth all her sons
In arms upon our coasts, could conquer France,
While she remains at unity within.
No power can conquer France, save France herself.

TALBOT.

We are not slack to honour the true friend,
But prudence tells us to avoid the false one.

BURGUNDY.

He, who would shun the debt of gratitude,
Fears not with hardy front to vent the lie.

ISABELLE.

How, noble Duke! can you so deeply stain
The princely honours of your house, and lay
Your hand in his, who basely slew your sire?
And do you madly think the Dauphin e'er
Will in true friendship knit his heart to yours,
Driven as he is, even to perdition's brink,
By your strong arm. And when he lies so low,
Would you with thoughtless folly raise him up,
And rashly spoil the work of your own hands?
Here stand your friends. Your solid power and weal
Rest only on your league with England's sons.

BURGUNDY.

Peace with the Dauphin was not in my thoughts,
But the contemptuous haughtiness and scorn
Of these proud islanders I cannot brook.

ISABELLE.

Come, come! you must forgive him the rash word.
A leader's mind is pressed with anxious care,
And ill luck, you well know, makes him unjust.
Come, then! embrace; let me with healing words
Repair this breach, before it grow too wide.

TALBOT.

What say you, Burgundy? The noble mind
Avows its errors, when by reason won.
The queen with wisest words hath interposed,
And let this hearty pressure of your hand
Close up the wounds which my rash tongue has made.

BURGUNDY.

The queen hath wisely spoken, and my wrath,
Though just, gives way to stern necessity.

ISABELLE.

It glads me much to see you friends again.
Seal then the treaty with a brother's kiss,
And may the winds disperse the past in air.

[BURGUNDY *and* TALBOT *embrace.*

LIONEL *(looking at the group, aside).*

Good luck attend the peace made by a fury!

ISABELLE.

My worthy generals, we have lost one field,
Fortune declared against us, but for that
Let not your noble courage droop. The Dauphin,
Despairing of heaven's countenance, has called
Satanic arts to help him, but I hope,
He has in vain given to the fiends his soul,
And that his hellish arts will nought avail.
A conquering maiden leads the hostile troops,

I will myself lead yours, and be to you
'Stead of a maiden and a prophetess.

LIONEL.

Go back to Paris, Madam, our good swords,
Not female arms, shall win us victory.

TALBOT.

Go, go! since you came hither to the camp,
All things go wrong, no luck attends our arms.

BURGUNDY.

Go! for your presence here brings us no good.
The soldiers grow impatient at your stay.

ISABELLE *(looks with astonishment at them, one after another).*

And you too, Burgundy, do you 'gainst me
Take part with these ungrateful Englishmen.

BURDUNDY.

Go! leave us! for the soldier loses heart,
When he believes he's fighting for your cause.

ISABELLE.

Scarce with each other have I reconciled you,
But against me you instant join in league.

TALBOT.

For heaven's sake, Madam, leave us. When you're gone,
Not all the devils in hell shall frighten us.

ISABELLE.

Am I not joined in faithful league with you?
Is not your cause my own?

TALBOT.

True. But your cause

Concerns not us. England is pledged to wage
An honourable warfare.

BURGUNDY.

I avenge
My father's blood shed by a murderer's hand.
True filial duty sanctifies my arms.

TALBOT.

In plain truth, what you do against the Dauphin,
Cannot to God or man be justified.

ISABELLE.

Heaven blast him, and his latest progeny!
He has abused and vilified his mother.

BURGUNDY.

He did avenge a father and a husband.

ISABELLE.

He dared to sit in judgment on my deeds!

LIONEL.

That from a son was most irreverent!

ISABELLE.

He sent me into exile.

TALBOT.

'Twas to please
The public voice.

ISABELLE.

May curses light on me,
If I do e'er forgive him! And for this,
Ere he shall rule in this his father's realm—

TALBOT.

Or offer to his mother reverence due!

ISABELLE.

Ye know not, poor weak creatures as you are,
The furies of a wounded mother's heart.
I love the hand that does me good, and hate
The hand that wrongs me, and were it my own son,
Whom I have bred, I hate him so much more.
'Tis true I gave him being, and I have
A right to take it back, since he, with foul
And most unnatural treason, wounds the breast
Which nursed him. You, who war against my son,
You have no cause to rob him of his crown.
How has the Dauphin injured you? What laws
And duties has he broken? You can plead
Nought but ambition and invidious spite;
My hate is fair and just,—he is my son.

TALBOT.

Aye, in this wrath he feels his mother's arm.

ISABELLE.

Poor hypocrites! how I depise you all!
Who both the world and your own hearts deceive.
You English stretch your greedy hands to seize
Upon this realm, in which you have no right
Or valid claim, no, not to so much earth
As a beast's hoof can cover. And this Duke,
Whom the world calls the Good, he sells, forsooth,
His country, which his ancestors bequeathed him,
To foreign masters, enemies of France.
And yet your constant cry is—equity.
—I hate dissimulation—as I am,
I would appear to all mankind—

BURGUNDY.

Most true!
Boldly do you assert your great renown.

ISABELLE.

Why I have passions, and my blood is warm
As that of others. I came to this land
To be a queen in deed and not in shew.
Should I renounce all joy, because hard fate
Had linked me, in the freshest bloom of youth,
To a poor moon-struck husband? I do love,
More than my life, my freedom, and the man,
Who wounds me in that point—But why should I
Weary you thus by talking of my rights?
A thick and sluggish stream flows in your veins,
You know not pleasure, nought but rage and strife.
And this good easy Duke, who all his life
'Twixt good and bad has wavered; from his heart
Can neither hate, nor yet from his heart love.
—I go to Melun.—Let me have this man,
[*Pointing to* LIONEL.
For sport and company—I like him well—
And then do what ye list! I'll ne'er ask more
After Burgundians or Englishmen.
[*She nods to the Page, and is about to go.*

LIONEL.

You may depend on't—all the finest youths
We take in battle, shall be sent to Melun.

ISABELLE *(coming back).*

You English brandish well your swords in fight,
The Frenchman only speaks in phrase polite. [*Exit.*

TALBOT.

Heavens! what a woman!

LIONEL.

Well! resolve we, generals,
Whether to fly still further, or turn back
To face the foe, and by some rapid stroke
Wash out the stains of this day's sore defeat.

BURGUNDY.

We are too weak, our troops too much dispersed,
Scarce from their panic have they time to breathe.

TALBOT.

'Tis but the working of an idle fear,
The panic of a moment: this dread image
So frightful to the fancy, nearer seen,
Will vanish into air. Then 'tis my voice,
That with day break we lead the army back
Across the Yonne to meet the enemy.

BURGUNDY.

Consider—

LIONEL.

With your leave, most noble Duke,
Here is no room for doubt. Quickly we must
Repair our loss, or be disgraced for ever.

TALBOT.

Enough. To-morrow we attack the foe.
And to destroy this phantom sprung from hell,
Which palsies with affright the soldier's arm,
Let us ourselves with this young virgin fiend
Grapple in personal conflict. If she meet
Our valiant swords, it is for the last time.

If she decline it, and full well we know,
She shuns the fierce encounter, then our troops
Are disenchanted of this slavish fear.

LIONEL.

So be it. And let the welcome task be mine,
To play this easy bloodless game in arms.
I trust, that I shall take this ghost alive,
And even before her lover Dunois' eyes,
With this good arm I'll bear her to the camp,
And let our soldiers make their sport with her.

BURGUNDY.

You promise boldly.

TALBOT.

If I meet with her,
I shall embrace her in a rougher mood.
But come, let us recruit our wearied limbs
With the soft dews of sleep, and soon as light
Dawns in the east, prepare we for our march.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter JOANNA *with the banner, in helmet and breast-plate, otherwise clad like a woman.* DUNOIS, LA HIRE, *Knights, and soldiers, are seen above, on the road upon the rock: they march forward in silence, and appear immediately afterwards upon the stage.*

JOANNA *(to the Knights, who surround her, whilst the procession above still continues).*

The rocky pass is won, we're in the camp!

Now cast aside the friendly veil of night,
Which hid your march, and let a deafening shout
Announce your dreaded coming to the foe,
" God and the Virgin" be the battle-cry!

ALL *(cry aloud with a wild clang of arms).*

God and the Virgin! [*Drums and trumpets.*

WATCH *(behind the scene).*

Ho! the foe, the foe!

JOANNA.

Bring hither torches! Set their tents on fire!
Let the fierce flames redouble their alarms,
And threatening death on all sides close them in.

[*Soldiers hasten out; she is going to follow.*

DUNOIS *(holding her back).*

Maiden, thy task has been fulfilled. Thine arm
Has brought us safe into the hostile camp,
And given into our hand the enemy.
Withdraw thee now from the dire shock of arms,
And leave to us the fierce arbitrement.

LA HIRE.

Point thou the road to victory, and bear
The sacred banner in thy virgin hand.
But wield not thou the deadly sword, nor tempt
The treacherous God of battles, for he walks
Blind and relentless through the ranks of war.

JOANNA.

Who shall withhold mine arm? Who dares constrain
The spirit from above? The arrow flies
Whither the bowman's hand impels its course.
Where danger is, there must Joanna be.

'Tis not my destined lot to fall to-day,
Or on this field; first must I see the crown
Placed on the brows of my beloved king.
No foeman's deadly sword shall pierce this breast,
Till I have executed heaven's behest. [*Exit.*

LA HIRE.

Come, Dunois! follow we the warlike maid,
And with our brave breasts shield her from the foe.
[*Exeunt.*

English soldiers fly over the stage.

FIRST SOLDIER.

The maiden's in the camp!

SECOND SOLDIER.

Impossible!
It ne'er can be. How came she in the camp?

THIRD SOLDIER.

She came through the air. The devil helped her hither.

FOURTH AND FIFTH SOLDIER.

Fly, comrades, fly! the maiden's at our heels.

TALBOT *(coming in).*

They hear me not. They will not turn or stay.
Commands are vain, the bands of discipline
Are burst asunder; as if hell itself
Had spewed out legions of tormented fiends,
A maddening fear has seized on all our host,
The brave man and the coward fly alike.
In vain I try to muster a small band,
To stay the foe, who, with o'erwhelming force,
Into our camp resistless burst their way.

Is mine the only sober brain, and all
Around me maddening with the fever's heat?
—To fly before these starveling rogues, whom we
These twenty times have beaten in the field!
Who is she then, this wonderous Amazon,
Goddess of terror, who at once can turn
The scale of fight, and into lions change
A herd of timorous deer? This juggling girl,
Who plays by rote the part of heroine,
Shall she affright true heroes from the field,
And tear the hard-earned laurels from my brow?

A SOLDIER *(rushing in)*.

Fly, general, fly! the maiden!

TALBOT.

Fly thyself
To hell! this sword shall pierce the dastard's heart,
Who dares to talk of coward fear and flight. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

The prospect opens and discovers the English camp on fire. Drums, flight and pursuit. After a little while MONTGOMERY *enters.*

MONTGOMERY *(alone)*.

Ah! whither shall I fly from foes and death!
The furious chieftain here with threatening sword,
Opposing flight, drives us upon our fate.
And there the dreaded maid, who o'er the field
Rages like flames of fire:—and nought around,

Nor bush nor tree to shelter me from sight.
Oh! that I ne'er had crossed the briny deep!
Unhappy wretch! Ambition's idle dream
Urged me to seek a cheap renown in arms.
And now my luckless fate has brought my steps
To this dire field of blood. Oh! how I wish
Myself at home, on Severn's flowery banks,
Safe in my father's house, where I have left
My weeping mother, and my tender bride.

[JOANNA *shews herself at a distance.*

Ah me! what horrors! yonder is the maid!
Darkling she rises from yon livid flames,
As from the jaws of hell a ghost of night.
How shall I 'scape her? With those eyes of fire
Already does she fix me, and from far
With basilisk glance rivet me to the spot.
Around my feet she close and closer binds
The magic cords, that they refuse to bear
My trembling weight. How shall my beating heart
Sustain the combat with this deadly form?

[JOANNA *takes a few steps towards him, and again stands still.*

She comes! I will not wait till the fell fiend
Attacks me first. I will embrace her knees,
And beg for life. She is of woman born,
Perchance my tears may soften her to pity.

[*Whilst he is going towards her, she steps quickly forward.*

JOANNA.

Thy doom is fixt! thou art of English blood!

MONTGOMERY *(falls at her feet)*.

Oh! stay thy hand, plunge not the ruthless steel
In the defenceless bosom, I have cast
Both shield and sword away, and lowly fall,
Unarmed, a trembling suppliant at thy feet.
Grant me but life, and thou shalt have rich gifts
Of ransom, for my father dwells at home,
Blest with abundance, in the beauteous land
Of ancient Wales, where, through his flowery meads
And mossy rocks, the winding Severn rolls
His silver stream; and fifty villages
Acknowledge him their lord. He with rich gold
Will ransom his dear son, soon as he hears
That I do live a captive in your camp.

JOANNA.

Poor driveling fool! knowest thou not, thou art fallen
Into the maiden's hand, from which no hope
Remains of rescue or deliverance?
If fate had thrown thee on the tiger's path,
Or scaly crocodile's, hadst thou bereaved
The lioness of her whelps, thou might'st have found
Compassion; but it is a fearful thing
To meet the maiden, for the awful league,
Which binds me to the invulnerable band
Of spirits, doth enjoin me to destroy
All that hath life and motion, which the God
Of battle gives relentless to my sword.

MONTGOMERY.

Thy words are fearful, but thy looks are mild,
At nearer view, thou art not terrible,

Thy soft and lovely form touches my heart.
Oh! by the mildness of thy piteous sex,
I do beseech thee spare my tender youth.

JOANNA.

Do not adjure my sex, call me not woman.
For as the bodiless spirits, who woo not
In mortal fashion, so have I no sex
Like mortal men; this mail covers no heart.

MONTGOMERY.

Oh! by the holy sovereign power of love,
To which all hearts pay homage, hear my prayer.
At home I've left a sweet betrothed bride,
Beauteous as thou art, in the bloom of youth,
Who weeps for my return. Oh! if thou hopest
E'er to be blest in love, do not divide
Two hearts, which love has knit in fondest bands.

JOANNA.

Thou call'st on foreign earthly Gods, whom I
Worship not or regard. The bonds of love,
Which thou adjur'st, I know not, nor will e'er
In base submission bow beneath his power.
Defend thy life, this hour calls thee to death.

MONTGOMERY.

Oh! let compassion touch thee for the dear
And mourning parents whom I left behind.
For thou has parents, sure, who sick at heart,
Lament thy absence from their longing arms.

JOANNA.

Unhappy wretch! And dost thou call to mind
How many mothers in this land are childless

By your fell swords, how many children reft
Of tender fathers, and how many brides
In widowed anguish mourn their slaughtered lords?
Now let despair and anguish touch the hearts
Of English mothers, let them know the grief
And burning tears, which our French wives have shed.

MONTGOMERY.

'Tis hard to die unwept in foreign land!

JOANNA.

Who called you to that land, to make our fields
A barren waste, to drive us from our flocks,
To throw the firebrands of unrighteous war
Into the peaceful bosom of our towns?
Perchance, in your mad pride ye fondly dreamed
To make the free-born Frenchman basely crouch
In slavery at your feet, and this great land
Bind like a cock-boat underneath the stern
Of your tall ship of war. Oh! fools and blind!
The royal arms of France proudly emblazed
Hang on the throne of God, sooner ye might
Pluck from the heavenly wain a golden star,
Than from this realm a village, for it stands
Eternal, indivisible. The hour
Of vengeance comes at last, never with life
Will ye be wafted o'er the hoary sea
Which God has made to sever our domains,
And which in his despite ye dared to cross.

MONTGOMERY.

Oh, I must die! no hope of life is left.

JOANNA.

Die then, my friend. Why shouldst thou shrink from
death?
'Tis man's inevitable doom. Lo! I
Am but a humble maiden, and by birth
A shepherdess, this hand, unused to wield
The sword, has borne the innocent shepherd's crook.
But severed from the haunts my childhood loved,
Torn from a father's and a sister's arms,
Here must I—not mine own will, but the voice
Of heaven with might resistless drives me on—
Here must I wander, like a spirit of wrath,
Working the deeds of woe, and through your ranks
Dealing out death, to which myself at last
Must fall a victim. For I ne'er again
Shall see my much-loved home. This arm shall slay
Full many an English soldier, many wives
Shall it make widows, but at last myself
Must fall, and thus fulfil my destiny.
—Do thou submit to thine. Then take thy sword,
And for the prize of life enter the lists.

MONTGOMERY *(stands up)*.

If thou art mortal like myself, and arms
Can wound thee, to my hand the fates may give
The glorious lot to send thee quick to hell,
And end the woes of England. I commend
My cause to God's all-gracious hand. Do thou,
Accursed, call thy hellish fiends to aid.
I dare thee to the proof. Defend thy life.

[*He seizes shield and sword and attacks her, military music is heard at a distance, after a short fight* MONTGOMERY *falls.*

JOANNA.

So ends thy luckless journey! fare thee well!

[*She turns away from him, and stands in a thoughtful posture.*

Oh! Holy Virgin, how I feel thy power!
To the weak arm thou givest surpassing strength,
And mak'st this heart inexorably stern.
My soul melts into pity, and my hand
Trembles, as if it impiously would dare
To violate some temple, when it wounds
The blooming bodies of our English foes.
A shuddering seizes me, even to behold
The unsheathed sword, but when the battle cry
Resounds, I feel unwonted strength infused,
And in my trembling hand the unerring sword,
As if instinct with spirit, deals the blow.

Enter a Knight with a closed vizor.

KNIGHT.

Accursed of heaven! thy destined hour is come!
Through the whole field of battle have I roamed
To seek thee. Treacherous juggling fiend, return
Back to the infernal pit, from which thou camest.

JOANNA.

What man art thou, whom his bad angel sends
To meet my deadly arm, thy form and bearing

Is princely; as I judge, thou art not English.
Thy fillet marks thee of Burgundian race,
'Gainst whom my sword falls pointless to the ground.

KNIGHT.

Reprobate wretch! unworthy as thou art
To fall beneath a prince's hand! the axe
Of public justice thy accursed head
Should sever from the trunk, and not the sword
Borne by the royal Duke of Burgundy.

JOANNA.

Art thou indeed the noble Duke himself?

KNIGHT.

I am! then tremble, caitiff, and despair!
Thy hellish arts will here avail thee nought.
Till now thine arm has dealt with cowards only,
A man defies thee!

Enter DUNOIS *and* LA HIRE.

DUNOIS.

Turn thee, Burgundy,
And fight with men, not with a tender maid.

LA HIRE.

Our swords protect the holy prophetess,
First must this breast be by thy weapon pierced.

BURGUNDY.

Neither this amorous Circe do I fear
Or you, whom she so foully has transformed.
Bastard, dost thou not blush? Shame on thee, La Hire!

That ye your ancient valour do demean
To deal in hellish arts, and make yourselves
The paltry squires of a fiend-serving maid.
Come on! I dare you all! He, who despairs
Of God's protection, seeks the aid of hell.

[*They prepare for combat,* JOANNA *steps between.*

JOANNA.

Hold there!

BURGUNDY.

What! fear'st thou for thy lover's life?
Before thine eyes he shall—

JOANNA.

Stay! hold your hands!
Part them, La Hire! no French blood must be shed.
'Tis not by swords this question must be tried.
The stars have otherwise decreed. Cease then
This impious combat! hear and reverence
The holy spirit, which within me speaks.

DUNOIS.

Why dost thou hinder my uplifted arm
And stay the fierce arbitrement of blood?
The sword is drawn, and swift descends the blow,
Which shall avenge France and the righteous cause.

JOANNA

(Places herself between them, and divides both parties by a wide space in the middle).

(To the Bastard). Go to that side!

(To LA HIRE*).* Stir thou not from that place!
I wish alone to parley with the Duke.

(When all is still). What wouldst thou, Burgundy?
Who are these foes,
Whom thou with murderous look seek'st to destroy?
This noble prince is a true son of France
As thou thyself, this other valiant knight,
Thy friend in arms and loyal countryman.
I am myself a daughter of this realm.
All we—whom to destruction thou wouldst doom,
Belong to thee and thine, our loving arms
Are open to receive thee, on our knees
We long to do thee homage, our brave swords
Against thee have no point. We do revere
That face, though in a hostile helm arrayed,
Which bears the features of our much-loved king.

BURGUNDY.

Wilt thou, with honied words and flattering tones,
Decoy thy victim, siren! Vain thy sleights!
Such arts befool not me. My ears are stopt
Against thy treacherous lore. The fiery darts
Shot from thine eyes glance harmless from the mail
With which my breast is cased. Dunois, to arms!
Blows must decide this cause, not empty words.

DUNOIS.

First hear, and then to blows. Art thou afraid
To listen? That were cowardly, and betrays
An inward feeling, that your cause is bad.

JOANNA.

We do not fall submissive at your feet,
Driven by imperious need, we do not come
In guise of humble suppliants. Look around!

In ashes lies the English camp, your dead
Cover the field. Thou hear'st the trumpet's voice
Proclaim its song of triumph through our host.
God has decided, ours the victory.
The laurel branch, fresh broken from its stem,
It is our heart's wish with our friend to share.
—Come to our side then! noble fugitive, come!
Come to the side of right and victory.
Myself, the ambassador of heaven, hold out
A sister's hand to thee. 'Tis for thy sake,
That I would draw thee to the righteous side.
Heaven has declared for France. The angelic host,
Thou canst not see them, combat for the king,
Their forms bedecked with lilies. Our good cause
Is like this banner, white as purest light,
And the pure Virgin is its emblem chaste.

BURGUNDY.

Deceit and falsehood speak but to insnare.
Yet is her speech artless and infantine.
If the infernal powers inspire her tongue,
They do indeed most aptly counterfeit.
I'll hear no more. Dunois! La Hire! to arms!
I feel mine ear is weaker than my hand.

JOANNA.

Thou sayest I am a juggler, that I call
The arts of hell to aid me. Is it then
The part of Satan to bring peace on earth,
And reconcile deep-rooted enmity?
Does concord spring from the infernal pit?
And what deserves the name of holy and good,

If not to combat in our country's cause?
How long has nature stirred this war against
Herself, that heaven deserts the righteous cause,
And fiends defend it? If my tongue speak true,
Whence but from heaven could I have gained the
power?
Who would have visited my humble haunts,
And joined in converse with the shepherdess,
To teach me the mysterious ways of kings?
Never till now have I beheld the face
Of kings and princes, and the arts of speech
Are strange and foreign to my tongue. But now,
When I have need to move thee, I possess
Discernment, sense of highest mysteries;
The fate of empires and of mighty kings
Lies clear as day before my youthful sight,
And in my mouth I bear a thunderbolt.

BURDUNDY

(Sensibly moved, opens his eyes upon her, and looks at her with astonishment and emotion).

How is't with me? Is it in truth some God
That in my deepest bosom turns my heart?
—Does not this touching form deceive me then?
No, no! if magic sleights delude my sense,
It is the work of heaven itself, my heart
Tells me it is,—her mission is from God.

JOANNA.

See! he is moved! I have not prayed in vain.
The thunder-clouds of anger on his brow
Melt into dewy drops, and from his eyes

The golden sun of tenderness breaks forth.
—Away with arms, and press him to your hearts.
He weeps, he is o'ercome, he's all our own.

[*She lets fall sword and banner, and runs to him with out-stretched arms, and embraces him with passionate vehemence.* DUNOIS *and* LA HIRE *let fall their swords, and hasten to embrace him.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

Camp of the King at Chalons on the Marne.

DUNOIS *and* LA HIRE.

DUNOIS.

We have been ever friends, brothers in arms,
For the same cause we drew the sword, nor wounds
Or death could part us from each other's side.
Let not the love of woman break the bond,
Which has outlasted every change of fate.

LA HIRE.

Hear me, my Prince!

DUNOIS.

You love the wonderous maid,
And well I know the plan your heart has formed.
You mean, without delay, to make your love
Known to the king, and at his hand request
The beauteous boon, which to your bravery
And duteous zeal he cannot choose but grant.
But e'er I'd see her in another's arms—

LA HIRE.

Prince, hear me speak—

DUNOIS.

'Tis not the vain delight

Of outward form, which draws my wandering eye.
Ne'er has this proud unconquered heart been touched
By woman, till I saw the wonderous maid,
Whom heaven's high destiny has sent to save
This ancient realm, and gives to me for wife.
And instant did I vow, with solemn oath,
Homeward to lead her as my lovely bride.
None but the heroine can be truly joined
To the strong hero, and this glowing heart
Longs on a kindred bosom to repose,
Conscious and powerful of the mighty weight.

LA HIRE.

How should I dare, my Prince, such poor deserts
As mine, to place against your name in arms.
Where the puissant Dunois in the lists
Appears, all other suitors must retire.
But sure, a lowly shepherdess can ne'er
Be deemed a spouse worthy to grace your side.
The royal blood, which flows within your veins,
Disdains to mix with such ignoble streams.

DUNOIS.

She, like myself, is holy nature's child,
And equal in nobility. Her hand
Cannot disgrace a Prince's, who herself
Is wedded to the holy Seraphim.
Her head is circled round with heavenly beams
Of brighter radiance far than earthly crowns,
And all the pride and pomp of human power
Lie at her feet poor and diminutive.
Were all king's thrones upon each other piled,

Even to the very stars, they would not reach
Her glorious height of angel majesty.

LA HIRE.

The king shall judge between us.

DUNOIS.

Nay, herself
Shall be the arbitress. Her arm has won
Freedom for this dear land, therefore she must
In freedom give the treasure of her heart.

LA HIRE.

Here comes the king!

Enter CHARLES, AGNES SOREL, DU CHATEL, *and* CHATILLON.

CHARLES *(to* CHATILLON*)*.

He comes, you say, to testify his faith,
And pay me homage, as his sovereign liege.

CHATILLON.

Here, Sire, in this your royal city Chalons,
The duke, my master, means to throw himself
Repentant at your feet. He gave command,
That I should greet you as my lord and king.
He follows at my heels and soon will come.

SOREL.

He comes! Oh! beauteous sun of this bright day,
Which brings us joy, and peace, and friends appeased.

CHATILLON.

My lord, the duke, comes with two hundred knights,
And means to kneel submissive at thy feet;

But he expects, that thou wilt raise him up,
And hail him cousin with a warm embrace.

CHARLES.

My anxious heart is fain to beat on his.

CHATILLON.

The duke moreover begs, when first you meet,
That not one word be spoken to recal
The ancient feud.

CHARLES.

Oh! may the past be sunk
For ever in oblivion, now at last
Our future days will shine serene and mild.

CHATILLON.

Those, who have fought for Burgundy, must all
Be with him joined in the same amnesty.

CHARLES.

So will my kingdom be of double strength.

CHATILLON.

And Isabelle, the queen, must in the peace
Have her part also, if it be her will.

CHARLES.

'Tis she who ware with me, not I with her.
Our strife is at an end whene'er she wills.

CHATILLON.

Twelve knights must be the sureties for thy word.

CHARLES.

My word is sacred.

CHATILLON.

And the Archbishop

Shall part the holy host between you both,
As pledge and seal of lasting amity.

CHARLES.

So be my portion of eternal bliss,
As heart and hand in this are one with me.
What other pledges does the duke require?

CHATILLON *(casting a look at* DU CHATEL*)*.

Here see I one, whose presence may perchance
Poison your friendly greeting.

[DU CHATEL *is going out in silence.*

CHARLES.

Go, Du Chatel!
Till the duke's eyes can bear to look on you,
You may remain concealed.

[*He follows him with his eyes, then hastens after him and embraces him.*

My worthy friend!
Thou wouldst for my sake do much more than this.

[*Exit* DU CHATEL.

CHATILLON.

This instrument explains the other points.

CHARLES *(to the Archbishop)*.

Let them be all arranged. We except none.
For such a friend no price can be too high.
Go, Dunois! take a hundred noble knights,
To meet the duke, and lead him to our sight.
The troops must all bedeck themselves with boughs,
To greet their brothers, and in festal trim
Must the whole city be adorned, the bells
Shall with their merry notes proclaim the news

That France and Burgundy are one again.

[*A noble Page comes in—a flourish of trumpets.*

Hark to the trumpet's voice! what may this mean?

NOBLE PAGE.

The Duke of Burgundy makes his approach. [*Exit.*

DUNOIS.

Come! let us go to meet him on the way.

[*Exit* DUNOIS, LA HIRE, *and* CHATILLON.

CHARLES.

In tears, my Agnes! I too almost fail
In strength, to bear me through this interview.
How many lives, alas! were doomed to fall,
Ere we could meet again in amity.
But now at length the storm has passed away.
Day springs from thickest night, time rolling on
With silent course ripens the latest fruits.

ARCHBISHOP *(at the window).*

The duke can scarcely through the thronging crowd
Enforce his way. They lift him from his horse,
They kiss his mantle and his very spurs.

CHARLES.

They are a kindly people, in their love
Quick-blazing as in anger. From their minds
How soon has past away, that this same duke
In bloody battle smote their sires and sons.
One moment swallows up a space of time!
Be calm, my Agnes! this excess of joy
Might prove a thorn to rankle in his side;
Nought here shall cause him shame or bitterness.

Enter the DUKE OF BURGUNDY, DUNOIS, LA HIRE, CHATILLON, *and two other Knights of the Duke's train. The Duke stands still at the entrance; the King moves towards him; at the same time the Duke approaches, and at the instant when he is about to kneel, the King receives him in his arms.*

CHARLES.

You have surprised us. It was our intent
To go and meet you; but you ride swift steeds.

BURGUNDY.

They bore me to my duty.

[*He embraces* SOREL, *and kisses her upon the forehead.*

With your leave,
My cousin. This is the lord's privilege
At Arras, and no beauteous female dares
Oppose the custom.

CHARLES.

Your court is, they say,
The seat of love, and famous mart of beauty.

BURGUNDY.

We are a trading people, good my liege,
The rich and varied produce of each clime
At Bruges in our market is displayed,
For shew and use, but what we prize the most,
Is the unrivalled beauty of our women.

SOREL.

Woman's fidelity is costlier still,
But never seen at market.

CHARLES.

Hark ye, cousin,
The world reports, you hold in light esteem
The truth and virtue of our beauteous dames.

BURGUNDY.

This heresy brings its own punishment.
How happy is your lot, my king! your heart
Has early taught you, what a dissolute life
Has taught me in a lengthened course of years.

[*He observes the Archbishop, and holds out his hand to him.*

Most reverend man of God! I pray your blessing.
Your place is always where it most behoves you.
He, who would find you, must with good men live.

ARCHBISHOP.

Let my great master call me when he will,
My heart is satiate with delight, I leave
The world in peace, since I have seen this day.

BURGUNDY (*to* SOREL).

They say, that you have given up all your jewels
To furnish arms against me. Is it so?
Are you so warlike grown, and was your mind
So bent upon my ruin? But our strife
Is ended, what was lost is found again,
Your jewels are come back to you; they were
Meant to make war against me, from my hand
Receive them now as pledges of affection.

[*He takes from one of his attendants the casket of jewels, and reaches it to her open.* AGNES SOREL *looks at the King with surprise.*

CHARLES.

Take it, the gift is doubly dear, a pledge
Of wrath appeased and lasting amity.

BURGUNDY *(while he is sticking a rose of diamonds in her hair).*

Why is not this the royal crown of France?
My heart would feel the same delight to place it
Upon this beauteous head.

[*Seizing her hand significantly.*

And—count on me,
Whene'er in after times you want a friend.

[AGNES SOREL, *bursting into tears, steps to a side; the King also struggles to suppress his emotion: all the by-standers look on the two Princes with great interest.*

BURGUNDY

(After looking through the whole circle throws himself into the King's arms).

My king! how could I hate you and forsake you?

CHARLES.

Be still! no more!

BURGUNDY.

How could I place the crown
Upon an English brow, and to a stranger
Swear fealty, while with horrid aim I sought
To plunge my king into the gulph of ruin?

CHARLES.

Let us forget the past. This happy hour
Blots out all wrongs.—It was our destiny,
Some star gleamed on us with aspect malign.

BURGUNDY.

I will make good the wrong: trust me I will.
Your pains and sorrows shall be recompensed.
Your kingdom shall be rendered to your hands
Whole and entire; you shall not miss a village.

CHARLES.

Since we are reconciled I fear no foe.

BURGUNDY.

My heart, believe me, laughs to scorn the arms
Banded against your realm.—Oh! if you knew—
(Pointing to SOREL*).* Why did you not send this ambassador?
Tears from her eyes I ne'er could have withstood.
—Not all the powers of hell shall now divide
Our hearts, since we have locked our arms together.
I feel myself at last in my true place,
Here on this breast my anxious wanderings end.

ARCHBISHOP *(steps between them).*

Princes, your hearts are reconciled! And France
Rises again a phœnix from its fires.
No louring storms now threat our future days.
The deep wounds, which the maddening hand of war
Has on this land inflicted, will close up,
Our flaming towns and ravaged villages
Will in fresh beauty from their ashes rise,
And our fields laugh in fresher green again.
But they, alas! whom your sad strife has laid
Low on their gory beds, will rise no more.
The scalding tears, which drop upon their graves,
Recal not them to life. The coming race

Will taste of prosperous days, they, that are gone,
Have been the sport of misery; the bliss
Of grandsons wakens not their slumbering sires.
Such are the fruits of your fraternal jars!
And let them prove a warning. Dread the sword
Before you draw it from the sheath. The hand
Of power can quick let slip the dogs of war,
But once let loose, they will not, like the hawk,
Which from his airy flight returns again,
Soon as he hears the falconer's well-known cry,
Obey the voice of man. We may not hope,
A second time, to see the hand of heaven
Raised for us in the crisis of our fate.

BURGUNDY.

Oh, Sire! an angel form dwells at thy side.
Where is she? For mine eyes seek her in vain.

CHARLES.

Where is Joanna? In this blessed hour,
Which to herself we owe, why is she absent?

ARCHBISHOP.

The holy maiden, Sire! loves not to stay
Within the precints of an idle court,
And when her heavenly mission calls her not
Into the busy world, her bashful eye
Fain would avoid the frivolous gazing crowd.
Sure, with her God she holds converse, whene'er
The weal of France does not demand her arm,
And heaven's own blessing all her steps attends.

Enter JOANNA, *dressed in a coat of mail, but without a helmet; she wears a chaplet on her head.*

CHARLES.

Thou com'st, Joanna, like a holy priestess,
To consecrate the bond thyself hast made.

BURGUNDY.

How dreadful was the maiden in the fight,
And yet how graceful in the attire of peace.
—Have I, Joanna, made my promise good?
Art thou content, do I deserve thy praise?

JOANNA.

Thou to thyself hast been the truest friend.
Thy form is now in holy light arrayed,
Though whilom, like the moon in crimson dyed,
It gleamed portentous in the troubled air.
(Looking round.) I see assembled many noble knights,
And every countenance seems big with joy,
Mine eye has met only one sorrowing face,
Which must conceal itself, while all around
Teems with delight.

BURGUNDY.

And who is he, that feels
Within himself crimes of so deep a dye,
That he despairs to win our princely grace?

JOANNA.

May he approach? Oh! tell me, that he may.
Make thy deserts complete. Be reconciled
To all, without exception or reserve.

One drop of gall, mixt with the cup of joy,
To poison turns the draught of blessedness.
—No wrong so bloody, but the noble duke
Sure would forgive it on this joyful day.

BURGUNDY.

Ha! I perceive thy drift.

JOANNA.

And wilt forgive?
Yes, noble duke, thou wilt.—Come in, Du Chatel.

[*She opens the door and leads in* DU CHATEL, *who remains in the distance.*

The duke, this day, holds out to all his foes
The hand of friendship, so he does to thee.

BURGUNDY.

What wouldst thou have, Joanna? Art thou aware
What thou dost ask?

JOANNA.

A kind and generous heart
Opens its door for every guest, and shuts
None from its presence; as the firmament
Girds with its azure vault this living world,
So should man's heart embrace both friend and foe.
The glorious sun sends forth his beams alike
Through all the realms of vast infinitude.
With equal measure does all-bounteous heaven
Shed on each thirsty plant its quickening dew.
Whate'er is good and cometh from above,
Without reserve is free alike to all.
But darkness lodges in the human heart.

BURGUNDY.

Oh! she can turn and wind me at her will,
Under her hands my heart is soft as wax.
—Come to my arms, Du Chatel, I forgive you.
Ghost of my father frown not, if I press
With friendly grasp the hand which shed thy blood.
And ye fell spirits of murder, call me not
Too strictly to account, that I do break
The oath of deadly vengeance which I swore.
In your dark realms of everlasting night,
There beats the heart no longer, all is still,
For ever fixt and motionless—but here,
Beneath the sun's bright ray, 'tis otherwise.
Man, while he breathes, is warm and sensitive,
The sport and prey of every passing hour.

CHARLES.

What thanks sufficient can I pay to thee,
Exalted maid! thou hast indeed redeemed
Thy promise! With what speed hast thou reversed
My destiny! My friends thou hast brought back,
Thrown on the ground my haughty enemies,
And freed my cities from a foreign yoke.
Thy hand alone has wrought these wonderous deeds.
Say, how can I reward such great deserts?

JOANNA.

Be thou humane in thy prosperity,
As thou hast been in troublous times—and when
Thou sitt'st upon the summit of thy greatness,
Forget not thou the worth of a true friend
In time of need—thy woes have taught thee this.

Refuse not to the lowest of thy people
Justice and mercy, for the voice of heaven
Called from the sheep-folds a poor shepherdess
To save the realm. Beneath thy sovereign sway
All France shall be united. From thy loins
A lengthened line of princes shall spring forth,
And they, who shall come after thee, shall shine
More bright and glorious on the rolls of fame,
Than they who sat before thee on the throne.
Thy race shall flourish, while within the hearts
Of Frenchmen love and duty find a place.
Their pride alone can lead them to a fall,
And from the lowly huts, where first the maid
Drew breath, whose arm hath saved thee, will arise
A cloud to whelm thy crime-stained progeny.

BURGUNDY.

Enlightened maid, by heaven itself inspired,
If thou canst look into the womb of time,
Speak to me also. Will my progeny
Extend their glory as they have begun?

JOANNA.

Duke, thou hast raised thy house even to the height
Of royalty itself, and thy proud heart
Would build still higher, till the aspiring roof
Should touch the clouds. But an invisible hand,
Stretched from above, will soon bid halt its growth.
Yet fear thou not the ruin of thy house.
Its glories in a virgin shall shine forth,
And sceptered monarchs, shepherds of their people,
Shall from her bosom issue. They shall sit

Upon two mighty thrones, and with just laws
Govern the known world, and (so heaven ordains)
A new one, which the mighty hand of God
Still hides beyond unnavigated seas.

CHARLES.

Oh! speak, if heaven reveals it to thy view,
Will this our league of friendship, which we here
Renew and ratify, unite in one
Our latest progeny?

JOANNA *(after a pause).*

Ye kings and rulers!
Beware of discord! wake not from his den
The slumbering fiend of strife, for once aroused
He will not soon be bridled. He begets
A swarming brood of iron-hearted sons,
And from one firebrand shoots a general flame.
—Seek ye to know no more, but be content
With present good, and leave the things to come
Buried in darkness.

SOREL.

Tell me, holy maid!
Thou seest my inmost heart, and know'st if it
Pant vainly after greatness, give me also
A comfortable oracle.

JOANNA.

The spirit
Shews to me only princely destinies.
Thy destiny is locked in thine own breast.

DUNOIS.

But, O exalted maid, beloved of heaven,

We fain would know, what fate reserves for thee.
Surely for thee is stored the greatest bliss,
Being so holy.

JOANNA.

What my fate shall be,
Rests in the bosom of the Eternal Sire.

CHARLES.

Thy fortunes be henceforth thy king's concern.
For I will make thy name in France renowned,
And latest ages shall repeat thy praise.
Even now I will perform the promise—kneel,
[*He draws his sword, and touches her with it.*
And rise a noble. I, thy king, exalt thee
Above the bearing of thy humble birth.
—Thy fathers I ennoble in their graves.
On thy escutcheon thou shalt lilies wear,
And with the noblest Frenchmen thou shalt be
In equal honour; save the royal blood
Of Valois, none shall nobler be than thine.
The first of my grandees shall feel himself
Exalted by thy virgin hand, be mine
The care to join thee to a noble spouse.

DUNOIS *(steps forward).*

My heart chose her, while yet in low estate;
The new-born honours, which adorn her head,
Neither exalt her merits or my love.
Here in the presence of my king, and this
Most holy bishop, I stretch forth to her
My hand, as to my loved and noble spouse,
If she will deign acceptance of the gift.

CHARLES.

Unconquerable maiden! thou dost heap
Wonder on wonder.—Yes, I now believe
Nought is to thee impossible. Thou hast
Subdued this proud heart, which till now has bid
Defiance to the sovereign power of love.

LA HIRE *(steps forward)*.

Joanna's brightest ornament, if right
I can interpret, is her modest heart.
Well she deserves the homage of the great,
But ne'er would raise her humble wish so high.
The dazzling charms of greatness move not her.
The warm affection of an honest heart
For her suffices, and the quiet lot,
Which with this hand I offer to her choice.

CHARLES.

La Hire, too! on my life two noble wooers,
Alike in valour and in arms renowned.
—Wilt thou, who hast appeased mine enemies,
My realm united, part in bitter strife
My dearest friends? One only can possess thee.
And in my judgment both deserve the prize.
Then speak thyself, thy heart must here decide.

SOREL *(approaches)*.

I see the noble virgin is surprized,
And crimson blushes tinge her modest cheeks.
Let her have leisure to consult her heart,
To unbosom to a friend her thoughts, and break
The seal, which yet binds up her icy breast.
Now is the moment, when I may approach

The rigid maiden with a sister's love,
That to my faithful keeping she may trust
Her secrets. Let us first in womanish guise
Talk o'er our womanish affairs, and wait
Our final resolution.

CHARLES *(about to go).*

Be it so!

JOANNA.

Not so, my gracious liege! That, which did stain
My cheek with red, was not the embarrassment
Of modest shame. Nought have I to confide
To this most noble dame, which I should blush
To speak of in the presence of you all.
I feel myself much honoured by the choice
Of these right noble knights, but I did not
Forsake my shepherd's cot, vainly to strive
After the idle greatness of this world.
I did not put this iron harness on,
To deck with bridal wreaths my braided hair.
'Tis to a work far different I am called,
Which none but a pure maid can bring to pass.
I fight the battles of the Lord of Hosts,
Nor must an earthly man call me his bride.

ARCHBISHOP.

Woman was born for man, to be his loved
And faithful helpmate, and if she obeys
The voice of nature, best fulfils heaven's will.
When thou hast executed God's behest,
Who called thee to the field, thou wilt lay down
Thine arms, and to the softer sex return,

Now cast by thee aside, and which was ne'er
Intended for the bloody works of war.

JOANNA.

Most reverend lord! I know not yet what tasks
The spirit will enjoin me; when the hour
Draws on, his sacred voice will not be mute.
I cheerful will obey. Meantime he bids,
That I complete my work. My sovereign's brow
Is not yet crowned, the holy oil not yet
Has touched his temples, not yet is he called
The King of France.

CHARLES.

We go straight hence to Rheims.

JOANNA.

Let us not loiter, while our foes around
Are on the alert to intercept thy march.
But I will lead thee through their thickest ranks.

DUNOIS.

And when the task has been fulfilled, and crowned
With wreaths of victory we enter Rheims,
Wilt thou then, holy maid, permit thy slave—

JOANNA.

If heaven wills, that victorious I return
Back from the field of death, my holy task
Is ended, and the lowly shepherdess
No more is needed in the royal house.

CHARLES *(seizing her hand)*.

The holy spirit now fills thy heart, and love
Is silent in the breast by heaven inspired.
Trust me it will not be thus silent ever.

This din of arms will cease, and victory bring
Peace in her blessed train, then will the joys
Of former days return to glad each heart,
And softer feelings wake in every breast.
In thine they also will awake, and tears
Of soft desire flow from thine eyes, such tears
As they ne'er yet have shed.—This heart which now
Is filled by heaven alone, will with soft love
Turn to an earthly friend. Thy potent arm
Has saved this realm, and thousands happy made,
And thou wilt end by making one thrice happy.

JOANNA.

Dauphin! does the celestial vision pall
So soon upon thy sense, that thou wouldst break
Its mould, and sink into the common dust
The holy maid, whom heaven has sent to thee?
Oh, fools and blind! A blaze of light divine
Shines round you, heaven's own wonders stand confest
Before your eyes, yet can you see in me
Nought but a woman. Would a woman dare
To clothe herself in arms, and mix with men
In mortal fight. Alas! for me, if e'er
My hand should bear the avenging sword of God,
While my vain heart glowed with the love of man.
Oh! it were better I had ne'er been born!
No more of this, I pray you, if ye would not
Provoke to wrath the spirit which in me dwells.
The man, who eyes me with the glance of love,
I do abhor as impious and profane.

CHARLES.

Break off, I see it is in vain to move her.

JOANNA.

Command the trumpets blow the blast of war,
I'm weary of this peaceful idleness:
The holy spirit impels me to the field
With force resistless, that I may fulfil
My work, and meet my awful destiny.

Enter a Knight in haste.

CHARLES.

How now! what news?

KNIGHT.

The foe has crossed the Marne,
And leads his troops to meet us.

JOANNA *(in extacy)*.

Blood and vengeance!
Now my soul mounts freed from her leaden bands!
Arm! arm! meanwhile I marshal the array. [*Exit.*

CHARLES.

Follow her, La Hire! Even at the gates of Rheims
Our foes will make us wrestle for the crown.

DUNOIS.

'Tis not true mettle urges their attempt,
But the last feeble effort of despair.

CHARLES *(to* BURGUNDY*)*.

Cousin, I spur you not. This is the day
To make amends for many luckless days.

BURGUNDY.

You'll have no cause to chide me.

CHARLES.

I myself
Will at your head march on the road to glory,
And my good sword shall in the sight of Rheims
Win me the royal diadem. My Agnes!
Thy knight bids thee farewell.

SOREL.

I do not weep,
Or tremble for thy safety; firm in faith,
My hopes are fixt above, for surely heaven
Has not bestowed these pledges of its love,
That we should end in sorrow. In these arms,
My fond heart tells me so, I shall infold
My much-loved lord, when crowned with victory,
He waves his banners on the walls of Rheims.

[*Exeunt. Trumpets sound a vigorous flourish, which changes, during the shifting of the scene, into a wild battle dissonance; the orchestra strikes in, as the scene opens, and is accompanied by warlike instruments behind the scenes.*

SCENE II.

The place of action changes into an open country, bordered by trees; while the music is playing, soldiers are seen hurrying over the back-ground.

Enter TALBOT, *supported by* FASTOLF, *and attended by soldiers. Afterwards* LIONEL.

TALBOT.

Here lay me down—under these trees—do you
Go back into the fight—I need no help
To yield my breath.

FASTOLF.

Alas! the luckless day!
(To LIONEL, *who then enters).* O Lionel, you come
To such a sight!
Here lies our general pierced with his death's wound.

LIONEL.

Forbid it heaven! My noble general, rise!
This is no time for languid feebleness.
Strive bravely against death, with mighty will
Command your sinking nature to revive.

TALBOT.

'Tis vain. The fated day at length is come,
Which must lay flat our French throne on the ground.
Vainly have I put forth my utmost might
In desperate conflict to avert this day.
Here do I lie, struck by the thunderbolt,

Never to rise again. We have lost Rheims,
So hasten to preserve the capital.

LIONEL.

Paris has made conditions with the Dauphin,
Just now a breathless post brought us the news.

TALBOT *(tears off the bandage).*

Then stream afresh, ye rivers of my blood,
For I am weary of this hated sun.

LIONEL.

I must not stay. Convey the general
To a safe place, we can no longer keep
Our present post, our troops fly on all sides,
The maiden rages with resistless force—

TALBOT.

Madness, thou triumph'st, and my star must set!
With folly even the Gods contend in vain.
Exalted reason, brightest effluence
Of Godhead uncreate, thou, who didst found
This world in wisdom, and command the stars
To wheel their courses through the void immense,
Say, what art thou, if pinioned to the tail
Of phrenzy's horse, with unavailing shrieks,
And open eyes, thou with the furious brute
Must plunge into the gulph? Oh! cursed fool,
Who spends his life in the pursuit of great
And worthy objects, and with wisest aim
Forms well-digested plans! This world belongs
To kings of straw.

LIONEL.

General, your ebbing life

Not many moments has in store—think then
Upon your maker.

TALBOT.

Had we been like men
Conquered by other brave men, then we might
Find comfort in the common turns of fortune,
Who blindly spins her ever-whirling wheel.—
But to be vanquished by these juggling tricks!
Did not an earnest and laborious life
Deserve an exit of more dignity?

LIONEL.

Farewell, my general! when the fight is o'er,
You shall have plenteous tribute of my tears,
If I return with life. But now I'm called
By destiny, that on the ensanguined field
Sits arbitress, and shakes her doubtful lots.
I trust to meet you in a better world.—
Short is the parting for so long a friendship. [*Exit.*

TALBOT.

The struggle soon is o'er, and I give back
To earth the atoms of this finer clay,
So long the organs of my pains and joys.
And of the mighty Talbot, who has filled
The wide world with his vast renown in arms,
Nought else remains but dust.—Such is the end
Of man, and all the great reward we reap,
From the turmoil of a tumultuous life,
Is to learn the nothingness of those
Poor honours and distinctions, which our hearts
Prized as the worthiest meed of toil and pain.

Enter CHARLES, BURGUNDY, DUNOIS, DU CHATEL, *and Soldiers.*

BURGUNDY.

The trench is stormed.

DUNOIS.

The day is all our own.

CHARLES *(observing* TALBOT*).*

Look! who is he, that with such piteous throes
Bids an unwilling farewell to the sun?
His arms bespeak him of no vulgar birth,
Go, run to him, if help may yet avail.

[*Soldiers from the King's train go towards him.*

FASTOLF.

Hold back! respect the dying agonies
Of him, whom in the field ye ne'er durst face.

BURGUNDY.

What do I see! the noble Talbot lies
Weltering in blood.

[*He goes up to him;* TALBOT *fixes his eyes upon him and dies.*

FASTOLF.

Hence Burgundy! away!
Let not the hated aspect of a traitor
Disturb the hero in his dying hour.

DUNOIS.

Unconquerable Talbot! canst thou be
Content with space so narrow, and the realm
Of wide-extended France could not set bounds

To the desires of thy gigantic spirit.
—Now, Sire, I hail you for the first time king,
The unsteady crown trembled upon your brow,
So long as in this body lodged a soul.

CHARLES *(after contemplating the dead body in silence).*

A higher arm than ours has laid him low.
He rests upon French earth, as on his shield
The hero, which he's deigned to leave behind.
Convey the body hence.

[*Soldiers lift up the body, and carry it out.*

Peace to his dust!
I'll raise for him a noble monument,
Even in the midst of France, where his famed course
The hero ended, shall his ashes rest.
Before him, ne'er did hostile sword advance
So far into our land, and be the place
Where he did yield his breath, his epitaph.

FASTOLF *(gives up his sword).*

Dauphin, I am your prisoner.

CHARLES.

Not so!
Grim war, which spares not when the battle glows,
Honours the pious duties of the friend.
You shall in freedom follow to the grave
Your loved commander.—Haste ye now, Du Chatel,
My Agnes trembles—stay her fond alarms—
Convey to her the news, that we both live
And triumph, and conduct her straight to Rheims.

[*Exit* DU CHATEL.

DUNOIS *(to* LA HIRE, *who enters)*.

La Hire, where is the maid?

LA HIRE.

That I would ask
Of you, I left her fighting at your side.

DUNOIS.

I thought she was protected by your arm,
Just as I hastened to attend the king.

BURGUNDY.

'Tis not long since, amid the thickest group
Of foes, I saw her milk-white banner wave.

DUNOIS.

Ah me! where is she? Fearful bodings seize me.
Come, let us haste to save her.—Much I fear
Her warlike heat has carried her too far,
Hemmed in the hostile ranks she fights alone,
And helpless yields to whelming multitudes.

CHARLES.

Haste, save her.

LA HIRE.

I will follow you.

BURGUNDY.

Come all.

[*They hasten out.*

SCENE III.

Another wild and desolate part of the field of battle. The towers of Rheims, appear at a distance enlightened by the sun.

A Knight entirely in black armour with a closed visor enters. JOANNA *follows him towards the front of the stage, where he stands still and waits for her.*

JOANNA.

Ah treacherous! now I understand thy sleights!
Most cunningly by counterfeited flight
Thou hast enticed me from the field of blood,
And many a Briton rescued from my sword:
But now upon thyself descends the blow.

BLACK KNIGHT.

Why dost thou dog me thus, and cling so close,
Inflamed with rage and fury, at my heels?
I am not fated by thy hand to fall.

JOANNA.

I do detest thy hideous form, thou stand'st
Gloomy as night, whose livery thou dost wear.
A wish resistless urges me to strike
Thy hated spirit from the light of day.
Who art thou? Lift thy vizor. Had I not
Beheld the warlike Talbot fall in fight
I should have said, thou art indeed himself.

BLACK KNIGHT.

And is the voice prophetic in thee mute?

JOANNA.

Deep in my inmost breast it loudly speaks,
That o'er my head some dire disaster lours.

BLACK KNIGHT.

Joanna, child of Arc! Upon the wings
Of victory thou hast reached the gates of Rheims,
Content thee with the glory thou hast won,
And tempt not fortune, which like a true slave
Has served thee, lest in wrath it may assert
Its freedom, for it scorns the bonds of faith,
And leaves its favourites in their mid career.

JOANNA.

Dost thou command me in my glorious course
To stand at gaze, and leave my task undone?
I will press onward and fulfil my vow!

BLACK KNIGHT.

All powerful maid! nought can withstand thine arm.
Thou triumph'st o'er each foe. But go no more
Into the field—obey my warning voice!

JOANNA.

Ne'er will I lay this weapon from my hand,
Till in the dust proud England's hopes are laid.

BLACK KNIGHT.

Look yonder! See where Rheims exalts her towers,
The end and mark of all thy toils—Lo! there
The proud cathedral glitters in the sun.
Thither wilt thou lead thy triumphal pomp,

Thy sovereign crown, and execute thy vow.
—Go thou not in—turn back—list to my warning.

JOANNA.

Who art thou, treacherous! with thy double tongue,
That wouldst confound and terrify my sense?
How dost thou dare with thy false oracles
To daunt my righteous spirit?

[*The Black Knight motions to depart, she steps into his way.*

No, thou stayest
To speak with me, or by this hand thou diest!

[*She is going to make a blow at him.*

BLACK KNIGHT (*touches her with his hand, and she remains motionless*).

Slay what is mortal!

[*Night, lightning, and a clap of thunder. The Knight sinks.*

JOANNA (*stands at first astonished, but soon recovers herself*).

It was nought human. A deceitful shape
Of hell, some wicked and rebellious sprite
Has risen from out the Stygian pool, to shake
My fixt and noble heart. Whom should I fear,
Armed with the sword of God? I will fulfil
My course victorious, and though hell itself
Should dare me to the lists, not all their might
Shall make my spirit blench with pale affright.

[*As she is going away,* LIONEL *enters.*

LIONEL.

Accursed of heaven, prepare thyself for fight,

We quit not both this place alive. Thine arm
Has laid the bravest of my people low.
But now the noble Talbot on my breast
Breathed out his noble spirit. I avenge
The brave, or share his fate. And that thou know
Who lends thee glory, whether he survive
Or fall, I tell thee, I am Lionel,
Last of the chiefs who led the English host,
Nor has this arm e'er been in fight subdued.

[*He attacks her, after a short combat, she strikes the sword out of his hand.*

Perfidious fortune! [*He struggles with her.*

JOANNA

(*Seizes him from behind by his crest, and tears off his helmet, so that his face becomes uncovered; at the same time she draws her sword with the right*).

Meet the fate thou seekest,
The Holy Virgin slays thee by my hand.

[*At this moment she looks him in the face; the sight moves her, she stands motionless, and then lets her arm slowly fall.*

LIONEL.

Why dost thou pause, and stay the deadly blow?
Take my life too, since thou hast slain my fame:
I'm in thy power, I do not wish for mercy.

[*She motions with her hand for him to go away.*

What, should I fly, and owe my life to thee?
No, I had rather die!

JOANNA.

I will not think
That to my hands his life was given.

LIONEL.

I hate
Thee and thy gifts, I will not have thy mercy.
Kill me, I do detest thee, and would fain
Have ta'en thy life.

JOANNA.

Kill me, and flee!

LIONEL.

What mean
These words which thou dost use?

JOANNA.

Ah! woe is me!

LIONEL *(comes nearer to her).*

Thou saidst, thou wouldst destroy all England's sons,
Whom thou couldst meet in battle.—Why should I
Alone move thy compassion?

JOANNA

(Raises her sword with a quick movement against him, but lets it quickly fall, as soon as she meets his eye).

Holy Virgin!

LIONEL.

How dost thou dare invoke that holy name?
She knows thee not, heaven has no part in thee.

JOANNA *(in the most violent agitation).*

What have I done? my sacred vow is broken!

[*She wrings her hands in despair.*

LIONEL *(observes her with interest and comes nearer).*
Unhappy maiden! I do pity thee.
My heart is touched, to me alone thy grace
And mercy have been shewn, I feel my hate
Is vanished, and thy fate must interest me.
Who art thou? and from whence?

JOANNA.

Away! away!

LIONEL.

I feel compassion for thy youth and beauty.
Thy look pierces my heart. Most anxiously
I wish to save thee! tell me how I may.
Come, come, renounce this fearful covenant.
These arms! Oh! cast them from thee.

JOANNA.

I am not
Worthy to bear them.

LIONEL.

Throw them quickly off,
And follow me.

JOANNA *(with horror).*

How! follow thee!

LIONEL.

Thou mayest
Be saved, if thou wilt follow me. I will
Preserve thee. But we must no longer stay.
I'm pained beyond all utterance for thy sake,
And feel a nameless longing to preserve thee.
[Lays hold of her arm.

JOANNA.

The bastard comes! 'Tis they; they seek for me.
If they should find thee here.

LIONEL.

My arm defends thee—

JOANNA.

Oh! I should die, if by their hands thou fall'st.

LIONEL.

Am I then dear to thee?

JOANNA.

Oh! heavenly saints!

LIONEL.

Shall I again see thee, and hear of thee?

JOANNA.

No, never, never!

LIONEL.

Give me as a pledge
This sword, that I shall see thee once again.

[*He wrests the sword from her.*

JOANNA.

Madman! thou dar'st!

LIONEL.

Now I must yield to force.
I meet thee soon again! Till then, farewell! [*Exit.*

Enter DUNOIS *and* LA HIRE.

LA HIRE.

She lives! 'tis she indeed!

DUNOIS.

Fear not, Joanna.
Thy friends are here all powerful at thy side.

LA HIRE.

Is not that Lionel who fled?

DUNOIS.

And let him.
Success, Joanna, crowns the righteous cause,
Rheims opes her gates, and all the people throng
With clamorous jubilee to greet their king.

LA HIRE.

What ails the maiden? She is pale and droops.

[JOANNA *reels and is going to fall.*

DUNOIS.

Perhaps she's wounded. Raise her armour off.—
It is the arm—the mischief is but slight.

LA HIRE.

Her blood flows.

JOANNA.

Oh! that life might flow with it!

[*She lies fainting in* LA HIRE'S *arms. The curtain drops.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A hall adorned as for a festival, the pillars are bound with festoons: behind the scene flutes and hautboys.

JOANNA.

The din of arms is silent, dance and song
Succeed to bloody fields, the sprightly pipe
And tabor sound through all the crowded streets.
Each church and altar shines in festive plight,
Green branches climb the doors and roofs along,
And pillars are with flowery garlands twined.
O'er-peopled Rheims scarce holds the numerous guests,
Who stream in shoals to see the festival.
—One only feeling of delight, one thought
Beats high in every bosom; they, who late
In bloody strife were severed, now partake
With rapture of the general joy, and he,
Who calls himself a Frenchman, proudly wears
The honoured name; new glory shines around
The ancient crown, and France with reverence due
Pays homage to the scion of her kings.
—Yet I, by whom these mighty works were wrought,
Taste not the common joy, my heart, alas!
Flies from this festive pageantry, and roves
With ceaseless fondness to the British camp.

And from the joyous circle I must steal,
To hide the load which presses on my heart.
And can it be, that in this holy breast
I bear the image of a man? This heart
Filled with heaven's glory, can it feel the flame
Of earthly love? I, who have saved this land,
And fought the battles of the Lord of Hosts,
To burn with love for France's enemy?
Hear it not, thou chaste sun! forbid it shame!

[*The music behind the scenes passes into a soft melting melody.*

Ah me! what tones! how they seduce mine ear!
And with their melting melody recal
His voice, and place his form before mine eyes!
—Oh! that the storm of battle round me raged!
And whizzing spears hissed o'er me through the air!
In the hot strife I might once more possess
My wonted spirit. Oh! these melting tones!
How they seduce my heart, and in my breast
Turn all my strength to melting tenderness,
And from mine eyes press out the scalding tear!

[*After a pause she proceeds in a more lively manner.*

Should I have killed him? Ah! how could I, when
Mine eye met his? Kill him! I sooner could
Have plunged the murderous steel in my own breast.
Was I to blame, 'cause I was piteous?
Is pity sinful? Pity! didst thou hear
The voice of pity and humanity,
When thou didst slay the others in the field?

Why was it dumb, when the poor youth from Wales
Begged for his life? Ah! treacherous heart! thou liest
Before the face of heaven, 'twas not the voice
Of pity, which did stay the deadly blow.
Why did I look on him? Why did I gaze
Upon those noble features? With that look
Began thy trespass, wretched, luckless maid!
Heaven should have chosen for its purposes,
A tool devoid of feeling and of sight.
Soon as thou *sawest*, the holy shield of God
Left thee, and hell around thee spread its nets.

[*The flutes begin again, she sinks into a quiet pensiveness.*

Oh! that I ne'er had changed the shepherd's crook
For the dire sword, nor from its mystic boughs
The sacred oak had whispered nightly dreams!
Great Queen of Heaven! why didst thou shew thyself
Arrayed in glory? Oh! take back thy crown,
Which I could ne'er deserve. Oh! take it back!
Ah me! I saw the heavenly portals stand
Wide open, and the saints enthroned in light!
But on this earth my hopes are fixt, in heaven
I have no portion. Ah! why was I called
To this dread charge? Could I make hard this heart,
Which heaven created soft and sensible?
Wouldst thou shew forth thy power divine, choose them,
Who stand in thine eternal house, thy bright
And ever-living spirits, whose pure breasts

Nor grief nor pity enters; choose not thou
The tender maid, the simple shepherdess.
What is to me the fate of war, the strife
Of kings and princes? Innocent and free
I fed my flocks upon the mountain heights.
But thou hast called me to these hated scenes,
To plunge me into crime and infamy.

SOREL

(Comes in with lively emotion: as soon as she espies JOANNA, *she hastens to her and falls upon her neck; suddenly recollecting herself, she leaves her hold, and falls down before her).*

Not so! before thee on my knees—

JOANNA.

Arise!
What may this mean? Thou surely dost forget
Thyself and me.

SOREL.

Nay let me. 'Tis the strong
Impulse of joy, which throws me at thy feet.
I must my overflowing heart pour out
Before the God of heaven, and in thy form
The Invisible I adore. Thou wast the angel,
Who ledd'st my lord to Rheims, and with the crown
Wilt deck his brows; that, which not even in dreams
I dared to hope, at length is come to pass.
The coronation pomp awaits, the king
Stands in his robes of royal state, the peers,
The grandees of the crown, are all convened
To bear the insignia, the tumultuous crowd

Stream to the great cathedral, in the streets
The sprightly dancers gambol, and the bells
Ring out their joyous peals. Oh! my poor heart!
It cannot bear this fulness of delight.

[JOANNA *lifts her gently up.* AGNES SOREL *remains silent for a moment, whilst she looks earnestly in* JOANNA'S *face.*

But thou art ever serious and austere.
Thou canst make others happy, but thou dost not
Partake their happiness. Thy heart is cold,
And feels not with our joys. Thine eyes have seen
The glories of the heavens, and thy pure heart
Cannot be touched with earthly happiness.

JOANNA *seizes her hand with eagerness, but soon lets it go again.*

Oh! that thou couldst but feel, and be a woman!
Cast off this mail, the storm of war is past,
And to the softer sex once more return.
My heart, which longs to fold thee in these arms,
Is scared to see thee stern as Pallas' self.

JOANNA.

What wouldst thou have me do?

SOREL.

Disarm thyself.
Throw off this warlike garb; the power of love
Fears to approach this mail-encased breast.
Oh! be a woman, and thou soon wilt love.

JOANNA.

Throw off my armour now! Rather I would
Lay bare this bosom in the rage of fight.

Not now—I must not—Oh! that sevenfold brass
Might save me from your festival—and from myself.

SOREL.

Count Dunois loves thee—his magnanimous heart,
Alive alone to glory and renown
In arms, glows for thee with a holy flame.
Sure it is well to see oneself beloved
By such a hero, better still to love him.

[JOANNA *turns away with horror.*

Thou hatest him? No, no! thou only canst
Not love—and wherefore shouldst thou hate? We hate
Him only, who bereaves us of our loved one.
But thou hast no beloved one, thy heart
Is void of passion—Oh! that it could feel!

JOANNA.

Pity me! pity my hard destiny!

SOREL.

What should be wanting to thy happiness?
Thou hast absolved thy promise, France is free,
Even to the city, where the sacred oil
Is treasured for the royal brow, thou hast
Thy king in triumph brought, and endless fame
Won for thyself: a grateful people pays
Reverence and homage to thee, from all tongues
Thy praise is heard; of this great festival
Thou art the goddess, even the king himself
Upon his throne shines not so bright as thou,

JOANNA.

Oh! could I hide me in the lowest depths
Of this unconscious earth!

SOREL.

What may this mean?
This strange emotion? Who should walk erect
With look serene and free, upon this day,
If thou must cast thine eyes down to the ground?
Leave me to blush,—me, who compared with thee,
Must feel so little worth, and ne'er could reach
The towering height of thy heroic spirit.
Dare I then to thy friendly ear entrust
The weakness of my soul? Not the renown
Of our dear country, not the royal throne
Renewed in splendour, nor the extatic joy,
Which thrills the hearts of countless multitudes,
Most moves my throbbing bosom. No, there is
But one who fills it wholly, it has room
Only for his loved image. He it is—
He is the adored of all, to him the crowd
Send forth their joyous cries and loud huzzas,
On him they shower their blessings, and for him
They strew these flowers. 'Tis he, my heart's beloved!

JOANNA.

Oh! thou art blest, beyond all utterance blest!
Thy love is fixt on one, beloved of all.
Thou canst unlock thy heart, and to the world
Proclaim thy happiness! This solemn feast,
In which the nation celebrates its love
And duty to its king, is thy love's feast.

The countless multitudes, who, wave on wave,
Crowd in these walls, all these, with one consent,
Partake and consecrate thy inward joy.
For thee their shouts ascend—for thee they weave
The flowery garland; with the bliss of all
Thy heart doth beat in unison; thou lovest
The sun, who shines on all, and what thou seest
Is all the varied splendour of thy love.

SOREL *(falling upon her neck).*

Oh! I am charmed! thou seest my inmost heart!
I had mistaken thee, thou knowest love's power
And speak'st in potent words all that I feel.
My heart is freed at once from slavish fear,
And springs to meet thee full of confidence.

JOANNA *(tears herself violently from her arms).*

Oh! leave me, leave me! do not stain thyself
With my polluted touch. Go hence, be happy,
And leave me in the deepest night, to hide
My shame, my horror, and my miseries.

SOREL.

All-gracious heaven! I comprehend thee not!
Nor could I ever; thy mysterious being
Did from mine eyes ever inwrap itself
In darkest shade. Who can e'er comprehend
What thus disturbs with horror and amaze
Thy heart, the abode of purity and truth.

JOANNA.

'Tis thou, that art the pure and holy one!
Couldst thou but see my heart, thou wouldst repel
The traitress and the foe with horror from thee.

Enter DUNOIS, DU CHATEL, *and* LA HIRE, *with* JOANNA'S *banner.*

DUNOIS.

Joanna, thou art called for. All is ready,
The king hath sent us hither, and he wills
That thou before him bear the sacred banner.
Among the highest grandees of the realm
Thy place must be, the nearest to himself.
For he does not deny, and all the world
Shall testify, that to thyself alone
He gives the honour of this glorious day.

LA HIRE.

Here is the banner; take it, noble maid.
The grandees wait, the people stay for us.

JOANNA.

I go before him! I the banner bear!

DUNOIS.

Whom else should it become? What other hand
Is pure enough to bear the sacred ensign?
Thou didst in battle bear it, bear it now
To grace the pageant of this festive day.

[LA HIRE *is about to reach the banner to her; she trembles and draws back.*

JOANNA.

Away! away!

LA HIRE.

What now! it is the same
Which thou victorious didst in battle bear,

The Queen of Heaven is on its field pourtrayed,
Hovering in air above the earthly globe,
Even as the holy mother taught it thee.

JOANNA *(looking on it with horror).*

'Tis she herself! Even thus before mine eyes
She did appear. See, how she knits her brows!
And from her darkling eye-lashes looks forth,
Glowing with anger.

SOREL.

She's beside herself!
Oh! talk not wildly thus. Collect thyself!
It is nought real which thou seest, it is
Her earthly image, wrought by workman's hand,
While she herself walks with the heavenly quires.

JOANNA.

All-dreaded! dost thou come, the sinful maid
To punish, slay me, take thy thunderbolts,
And let them fall upon my guilty head;
For I have broken the dread vow, I have
Blasphemed and vilified thy sacred name.

DUNOIS.

Ah me! what do I hear? what words prophane!

LA HIRE *(with astonishment, to* DU CHATEL*).*

Can you explain what means this strange emotion?

DU CHATEL.

I see what I do see. I long have feared
That it would come to this.

DUNOIS.

How's this? what say you?

DU CHATEL.

I dare not speak my thoughts. I would to God
The affair were over, and the king were crowned.

LA HIRE.

How! has the terror, which the banner sent
Before it, back returned upon thy self?
Let Britons tremble at this dreaded sign;
To France's foes it shews itself in wrath,
But to her true sons kind and merciful.

JOANNA.

Yes, thou sayest well. It favours France's friends,
But sends forth horror 'mongst her enemies.

[*The coronation march is heard.*

DUNOIS.

So, take the banner, take it. They begin
The solemn pomp. No moment must be lost.

[*They press the banner upon her; she grasps it with violent opposition, and goes off, the rest follow.*

SCENE II.

The scene changes to an open place before the Cathedral. Spectators fill the back-ground, from them BERTRAND, CLAUDE MARIE, *and* STEPHEN *step forward, also* MARGOT *and* LOUISA *behind them. The coronation march is heard softly playing at a distance.*

BERTRAND.

Hark to the music! They will soon be here.

What were it best to do? Shall we ascend
The platform, or attempt to pass the crowd,
That we may lose nought of the pompous show?

STEPHEN.

It is impossible to pass. The streets
Are jammed so full of horses, men, and cars.
Here let us step aside close to these houses,
Whence we conveniently may see the pomp,
As it goes by.

CLAUDE MARIE.

Methinks one half of France
Has met in Rheims. So mighty is the stream,
That in the far-off region of Lorraine,
It has upraised and hither floated us.

BERTRAND.

Who would sit idly in his corner, when
Such mighty deeds are stirring in our land?
It has cost pains and blood enough to place
The crown on the right head, and our good king,
Who is the true and lawful King of France,
Will not have worse attendance than yon king
At Paris, whom they crowned at St. Denys.
I hold him not an honest man, who stays
Away from such a festival, and would not
Join in the general cry, "long live the king."

[MARGOT *and* LOUISA *come up to them.*

LOUISA.

Now, Margot, we shall see our sister.—Oh!
My heart beats strangely.

MARGOT.

In the pride of greatness
We shall see her, and to each other say,
It is our sister, it is our Joanna.

LOUISA.

I never can believe, till mine own eyes
Have seen it, that this woman, whom they call
The Maid of Orleans, is our real sister
Joanna, whom we lost so suddenly.

[*The march continues to approach.*

MARGOT.

Dost thou still doubt? Seeing thou shalt believe.

BERTRAND.

Take heed, they come.

Men playing upon flutes and hautboys open the procession. Children follow, clad in white, with branches in their hands; behind them two heralds. Thereafter a procession of men with halberts. Magistrates in their robes follow. Thereupon two Marshals with their staves, the DUKE OF BURGUNDY *bearing the sword,* DUNOIS *the sceptre, other Grandees the crown, the imperial globe, and the staff of justice, and others with offerings: behind these, Knights in the dress of their order, choristers with the censer, then two Bishops with the vial of sacred oil; Archbishop with the crucifix; next to him* JOANNA *with the banner. She goes with her head sunk on her breast, and irregular step. Her sisters at sight of her shew signs of astonishment*

and joy. After her comes the King under a canopy borne by four Barons. Courtiers follow and soldiers bring up the rear. When the procession has got into the church the music ceases.

MARGOT.

Saw you the sister?

CLAUDE MARIE.

Her in golden armour;
Who with the banner walked before the king?

MARGOT.

The same. It was our sister, our Joanna.

LOUISA.

She seemed to know us not. She little thought
Her loving sisters stood so near to her.
She bent her eyes down on the ground, and looked
So pale, and trembled, as she bore the banner,
I felt no comfort when I saw her pass.

MARGOT.

So then—I now have seen our sister raised
To glorious majesty. Who would have thought
Even in a dream, when on our mountain heights
She drove her flocks, we e'er should see her thus,
Shining above the great ones of the realm?

LOUISA.

Our father's dream has been accomplished,
That we at Rheims should bow the head before her.
That is the church, which in his nightly dream
Our father saw, and all is now fulfilled.

But then he saw some visions full of horror—
Ah! I am grieved to see her grown so great.

BERTRAND.

Why stand we idle here? Come to the church
To see the holy ceremony.

MARGOT.

Aye, come!
Perchance we there may meet our wonderous sister.

LOUISA.

We have already seen her, let us go
Back to our village.

MARGOT.

What! before we have time
To greet her and to speak with her?

LOUISA.

She now
Belongs no more to us; her lofty place
Is among kings and princes. Who are we,
That we should idly strive to force ourselves
So far above our sphere; even while she lived
In our lone village, she was strange to us.

MARGOT.

Will she despise us, and feel shame of us?

BERTRAND.

The king himself did not feel shame of us,
With friendly tone he greeted even the lowest.
Be she so high exalted as she will,
The king is greater still.

[*Trumpets and drums are heard in the church.*

CLAUDE MARIE.

Come to the church.

[*They hasten to the back part of the stage, and are lost among the crowd.*

Enter THIBAUT, *dressed in black;* RAIMOND *follows him, and tries to hold him back.*

RAIMOND.

Stay, father Thibaut! stay back from the crowd!
Here you see nought but faces full of joy,
Your sadness will disturb the festival.
Come! let us quit this city!

THIBAUT.

Didst thou see
My luckless child? Say, didst thou mark her well?

RAIMOND.

Oh! flee, I do beseech you.

THIBAUT.

Didst thou mark
How her step trembled, how her visage looked
Pale and distempered?—The poor hapless wretch
Feels her lost state.—This is the golden hour
To save my child—and I will seize it—

RAIMOND.

Stay—
What would you do?

THIBAUT.

I'll take her by surprize,
And hurl her from her vain and sinful pomp.

Yes, I will use a father's power to bring her
Back to the God whom she denies.

RAIMOND.

Alas!
Consider well! plunge not your own dear child
Into perdition.

THIBAUT.

Let but her soul live,
I reck not of her mortal part.

[JOANNA *bursts out of the church without her banner; the people flock round her, worship her, and kiss her clothes: she is detained in the back-ground by the crowd.*

She comes!
See, how she bursts, all pale, out of the church!
Her anguish drives her from the holy place.
It is the hand of heaven, which o'er her head
Is raised in judgment visible.

RAIMOND.

Farewell!
Ask me to stay no longer; full of hope
I hither came, and must in grief depart.
Once more I've seen your daughter, and I feel
That I again have lost her, and for ever.

[*He goes out,* THIBAUT *retires by the opposite side.*

JOANNA *(having disengaged herself from the crowd, comes forward).*

I cannot stay—fiends flit before mine eyes,
And organs burst like thunder on mine ear,
The lofty roofs seem ready to fall on me,

—I must come forth to breathe in the fresh air!
I've left my banner in the sanctuary,
And never shall this hand touch it again!
—Methought I saw my two beloved sisters
Pass like a dream before mine eyes.—Alas!
'Twas but a cheating vision! They are far
From my fond arms, far as the happiness
Which gilded once my innocent infancy.

MARGOT.

'Tis she, it is Joanna!

LOUISA *(hastes towards her).*

Oh! my sister!

JOANNA.

So then! it was no dream—'tis you indeed!
Do I embrace you? My Louisa? Margot?
Here in this populous wilderness I fold
My dearest sisters in my longing arms.

MARGOT.

She knows us still! she still is kind and good!

JOANNA.

And has your love brought you so far from home,
So very far to see me? Were you not
Angry with your unkindly sister, when
She left you so, and bade you no farewell?

LOUISA.

It was heaven's secret will which led you forth.

MARGOT.

Your fame, which fills the world, and makes all tongues
Loud in your praise, even in our quiet vale
Roused us to listen, and has led us hither

To view the wonders of this festival.
We come to see the glory of our sister;
Not unattended.

JOANNA *(quick)*.

Is my father with you?
Where, where is he? Why does he hide himself?

MARGOT.

My father is not with us.

JOANNA.

Will he not
See his own child? Do you not bring his blessing?

LOUISA.

He knows not we are here.

JOANNA.

He knows it not!
Wherefore? You seem confounded, and look down
In silence on the ground. Say, where's my father?

MARGOT.

Since you departed—

LOUISA *(makes a sign)*.

Margot!

MARGOT.

Our poor father
Has been most pensive.

JOANNA.

Pensive!

LOUISA.

Nay, take comfort!
You know our father's anxious fretting spirit.

He will again take heart and be at peace,
When we assure him of your happiness.

MARGOT.

And are you happy? Yes, you must be so,
Being so great and honoured.

JOANNA.

I am, indeed,
When I see you again, and hear the tones
Of those loved voices, and bethink myself
In fond remembrance of my native home.
When on our mountain heights I drove my flocks,
Oh! I was happy as in paradise.
—I never more shall be so—never—never.—

[*She hides her face in* LOUISA'S *bosom.*

CLAUDE MARIE, STEPHEN, *and* BERTRAND *shew themselves and remain timidly at a distance.*

MARGOT.

Come, dearest Stephen! Bertrand! Claude Marie!
Our sister is not proud, she is so soft,
And speaks so kindly as she ever used,
While in our village she yet lived with us.

[*They come nearer, and are going to reach out their hands to her: she fixes her eyes upon them, and falls into a state of amaze.*

JOANNA.

Where was I? tell me. Was it all a dream?
And do I wake at last? Am I so far
From Dom Remi? Nay, now I know it all.
I fell asleep under the fairy tree,

And now awake, and find you round me here,
Well-known familiar forms. I only dreamed
Of kings and battles and the deeds of war.
They were but shadows which before me passed,
One's dreams are so distinct under this tree.
How did you come to Rheims? How came I hither
Myself? I never sure left Dom Remi.
Confess the truth, and cheer my doubting heart.

LOUISA.

We are at Rheims. It was not only in dreams
You wrought these wonderous deeds. You have, indeed,
Really performed them. Recollect yourself.
Look round, and feel these glistering golden arms.

[JOANNA *draws her hand over her breast, bethinks herself, and shudders.*

BERTRAND.

From mine own hand you did receive this helm.

CLAUDE MARIE.

It is no wonder that you think you dream,
When what you have performed and brought to pass,
Not even in dreams could be so passing strange.

JOANNA *(quick).*

Come! let us flee, I go along with you
Back to our village and my father's house.

LOUISA.

Oh! come, come with us!

JOANNA.

All these men would wish
To raise me far above my true deserts.

You've seen me as a child, little and weak,
You love me, yet you do not worship me.

MARGOT.

And would you leave this glorious dignity?

JOANNA.

I throw it all away, this hateful pomp,
Which parts your hearts from mine. I will again
Become a shepherdess. I'll wait on you,
Like a low maid, and sharply will atone
By penance, that I raised myself above you.

[*Trumpets sound.*

Enter the King, from the church, in his coronation robes. AGNES SOREL, ARCHBISHOP, BURGUNDY, DUNOIS, LA HIRE, DU CHATEL, *Knights, Courtiers, and people.*

ALL VOICES *(cry repeatedly whilst the King is coming forward).*

Long live the king! long live King Charles the Seventh!

[*Trumpets join in: upon a signal given by the King, the Heralds proclaim silence with uplifted staves.*

CHARLES.

Thanks for your love! thanks, gentle citizens!
The crown, which God has placed upon our brow,
Has by the sword been won, and is bedewed
With blood of dearest friends, but o'er it now
The olive branch shall spread its peaceful green.

Thanks be to all, who fought upon our side,
And they, who stood against us in the field,
Have our free pardon; God has shewn us grace,
And grace shall be the first word of your king.

PEOPLE.

Long live the king! long live King Charles the good!

CHARLES.

From God alone, the sovereign Lord of all,
The Kings of France receive the crown, but we
More visibly from his almighty hand
Receive the gift. Here stands the heaven-sent maid,
Whose arm hath placed us on the throne, and burst
The bonds of foreign tyranny. Her name
Shall be in equal honour with the name
Of holy Denis, patron of our land,
And to her glory altars shall be reared.

PEOPLE.

Hail to the maiden! the deliverer!

KING *(to* JOANNA*)*.

If thou art sprung from mortal race as we,
Say, how can we advance thy happiness.
But if thy country is above, if thou,
In this corporeal maiden form, conceal'st
The beams of heavenly light, take off the veil
From our frail vision, and display thyself
In thine own radiant shape, as in the realms
Of blessedness, that we, prone in the dust,
Submissive may adore.

[*A general silence; all eyes are turned to the maiden.*

JOANNA *(suddenly crying out)*

Oh god! my father!

[THIBAUT *comes out of the crowd, and stands directly over against her.*

SEVERAL VOICES.

Her father!

THIBAUT.

Aye, her most unhappy father,
Who gave her being, and whom the hand of God
Brings hither his own daughter to accuse.

BURGUNDY.

Hah! what is this?

DU CHATEL.

Now all will come to light.

THIBAUT *(to the King).*

Think'st thou the hand of God has saved this land?
Oh, erring prince! Oh people much deceived!
Thou hast been saved by the black arts of hell.

[*All start back astonished.*

DUNOIS.

Is the man mad?

THIBAUT.

Not I, thou'rt mad thyself,
And she, who stands beside thee, and this bishop,
Who think the Lord of Heaven would shew his might
By a low maid. Let's see now if she dares
Before her father's face assert the arts
Of juggling impious witchery, by which
She has deceived the people and the king.
Answer me.—I adjure thee in the name

Of Godhead undivided, three in one,
Art thou, as thou wouldst seem, holy and pure?

[*A general silence; all eyes are fixt upon her; she remains motionless.*

SOREL.

Heavens! she's dumb!

THIBAUT.

So must she, when she hears
That dreaded name, at which the lowest depths
Of hell do tremble. She a holy one,
From heaven commissioned! In a place accursed
The scheme was planned, under the magic tree,
Where from the oldest times the spirits of hell
Wont to resort—here to the foe of man
Did she make over her immortal part,
That he with short-lived glory might exalt her.
Let her stretch forth her arm—see there the points
The fiend has made to mark her for his own.

BURGUNDY.

Oh monstrous! Yet the father must speak true,
When he bears witness of his daughter's sin.

DUNOIS.

No, we must not believe the madman's words,
Who in his child's dishonour shames himself.

SOREL.

Oh speak! let not this dreadful silence chain,
Thy tongue. We do believe thee stedfastly.
Speak but one single word—we ask no more.
Dispel this horrid calumny—maintain
Thine innocence, and all our doubts will cease.

[JOANNA *stands motionless.* AGNES SOREL *retires from her with horror.*

LA HIRE.

She is affrighted. Horror and surprise
Have stopt her utterance. Innocence itself
Must tremble, when assailed by such a charge.

[*He comes nearer to her.*

Collect thyself, Joanna. Innocence
Possesses words and looks of power to dash,
Like lightning, the base slanderer to the ground.
Arise in noble anger, look around,
Confound and punish the unworthy doubt,
Which dares to blast thy holiness and truth.

[JOANNA *remains motionless.* LA HIRE *retires back with horror: the general emotion increases.*

DUNOIS.

Why stand the people so aghast? and why
Tremble the princes?—She is innocent.
For this I pledge my princely word.—I throw
My gauntlet down for him, who dares gainsay it,
And breathe suspicion on her spotless name.

[*A violent clap of thunder—general consternation.*

THIBAUT.

Answer me, in the name of the great God,
Whose thunder rolls above us, art thou guiltless?
Deny that Satan of thy heart has ta'en
Possession; tell thy father that he lies!

[*A second stronger clap; the people fly on all sides.*

BURGUNDY.

Preserve us heaven! what fearful signs are these?

DU CHATEL *(to the King)*.

Come, good my liege! flee from this awful place.

ARCHBISHOP.

I ask thee in the name of God: does guilt
Or conscious innocence thus seal thy lips?
If on thy side the rolling thunder speaks,
Then take this cross and motion with thy hand.

[JOANNA *remains immoveable—repeated and violent claps of thunder. The King,* ANGES SOREL, ARCHBISHOP, BURGUNDY, LA HIRE, *and* DU CHATEL *go off.*

DUNOIS.

Thou art my wife—I did believe on thee,
At the first sight, nor do I now distrust.
Not all these signs can shake my constant faith;
Not even the thunder which above us rolls.
'Tis noble scorn which makes thee silent, wrapt
In conscious innocence thou dost disdain
To contradict so foul a calumny.
—Disdain it then, but trust thyself to me,
Who ne'er have doubted of thy innocence.
Speak not one word, only stretch out to me
Thy hand, in token that thy trust is firm
In my good arm and thine own righteous cause.

[*He holds out his hand to her, she turns away with a convulsive motion; he remains fixt in astonishment.*

DU CHATEL *(coming back).*

Joanna, Maid of Arc! my sovereign wills
That you forthwith depart. The gates of Rheims
Stand open to you. Fear no injury.
The royal favour will protect your steps.
Count Dunois, follow me. Honour forbids
Your further stay. How luckless is this ending!

[*He goes out.* DUNOIS *recovers from his astonishment, casts a look at* JOANNA, *and goes off. She stands for a moment quite alone. At last* RAIMOND *appears; he remains some time at a distance, and looks at her in silent grief. He then goes up to her, and seizes her by the hand.*

RAIMOND.

The moment's precious—seize it—all the streets
Are clear. Give me your hand, I will conduct you.

[*At sight of him she gives the first signs of feeling, fixes her eyes upon him, and looks to heaven; then she seizes him violently by the hand, and goes off.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A wild wood, huts of woodmen at a distance. It is quite dark; violent thundering and lightning—in the intervals, firing.

Woodman and his Wife.

WOODMAN.

How awful is the storm! The vault of heaven
Seems ready to descend in floods of fire,
In the full height of noon 'tis dark as night,
That one might see the stars. The howling storm
Rages, as if all hell were broken loose.
The firm-set earth shakes, and the aged oaks
Creak in the blast, and bow their lofty tops.
Sure this wild uproar of the elements,
Which teaches even the wild beasts gentleness,
That they grow tame and creep into their dens,
Can bode no peace to man. Mixt with the howl
Of wind and storm, we hear the bursting crack
Of cannon. Both the armies stand so near,
Nought save the wood divides them, and each hour
The rancorous hate may gorge itself with blood.

WOODMAN'S WIFE.

May heaven preserve the land! it was but now

The enemy's force was beaten and dispersed,
How comes it that they raise their heads again?

WOODMAN.

Because they now no longer dread the king.
Since at the coronation they found out
The maid to be a witch, the wicked fiend
Helps us no longer, every thing goes wrong.

WOODMAN'S WIFE.

Hark! who comes there?

Enter JOANNA *and* RAIMOND.

RAIMOND.

Here I see cottages. Come! here we find
A shelter from the pitiless storm. Your strength
Holds out no longer; for these three days past
You've roamed about, shunning the haunts of men,
And roots and berries were your only food.
[*The storm abates: it grows bright and clear.*
They are kind-hearted woodmen. Let's go in.

WOODMAN.

You seem o'erspent with weariness. Come in!
What our poor cottage can afford, is yours.

WOODMAN'S WIFE.

What would a tender maiden with these arms?
Why sure the times are perilous, when even
A woman must put on a coat of mail!
Queen Isabelle herself, so says report,
Is seen in armour in the English camp.

They say too that a maid, a shepherd-girl,
Has gone to battle for our lord the king.

WOODMAN.

Why will you prate thus? Go and bring a cup
Of comfort, to recruit the maiden's strength.

RAIMOND *(to* JOANNA*)*.

You see all men are not so pitiless,
Even in the wilderness dwell kindly hearts.
Take comfort then! The storm has spent its rage,
And sweetly smiling sinks the setting sun.

WOODMAN.

Methinks, you wish to be with the king's camp,
Thus journeying in armour! Take good heed!
The English are encamped near to this place,
And their light parties straggle through the wood.

RAIMOND.

Ah! woe is me! How shall we 'scape their hands?

WOODMAN.

Stay till my boy returns back from the town.
He shall conduct you through the secret paths,
That you have nought to fear. We know the bye-ways.

RAIMOND.

Lay by your helm and arms, they point you out
To the eye's notice, but defend you not.

[JOANNA *shakes her head.*

WOODMAN.

The maid seems full of sadness. Hush! who comes?

The Woodman's Wife comes from the hut with a cup; the Woodman's Lad also enters.

WOODMAN'S WIFE.

It is the lad, whom we expected back.
Drink noble maiden! and God's blessing with it!

WOODMAN (*to his son*).

Anet, what news abroad?

WOODMAN'S LAD

(*Fixes his eyes on* JOANNA, *just as she puts the cup to her mouth: he recognizes her, runs up to her and wrests the cup from her hand*).

O mother! mother!
Whom are you treating? Know you who she is?
It is the witch of Orleans.

WOODMAN AND HIS WIFE.

God preserve us!

[*Cross themselves and flee.*

JOANNA (*calm and soft*).

You see the curse pursues me! all fly from me!
Pursue your way, and leave me to my fate.

RAIMOND.

Who? I forsake you? Who will then attend
Your wandering steps?

JOANNA.

I am not unattended.
You heard the thunder roll above my head.
Fate leads me on. Fear not but I shall reach
The destined goal, although I seek it not.

RAIMOND.

And whither would you go? Here stand the English,
Who swore the bloodiest vengeance on your head,
And yonder are our troops, who thrust you forth
Proscribed—

JOANNA.

Nought can befal me but what must.

RAIMOND.

Who will provide you food? Who will protect you
From savage beasts and yet more savage men?
Nurse you in sickness and in wretchedness?

JOANNA.

I know each herb and every healing root,
Mine own flock taught me to discriminate
The wholesome from the rank. I understand
The courses of the stars, the rolling clouds,
And hear the murmur of the hidden spring.
Man wants but little, and great nature's stores
Are rich.

RAIMOND *(seizes her by the hand)*.

Oh! will you not search your own heart?
Make peace with heaven, and penitent return
Into the bosom of the holy church?

JOANNA.

Do you believe me guilty?

RAIMOND.

Should I not?
When by your silence—

JOANNA.

You, who in my want

And wretchedness have followed me, who have
Alone been faithful, when all creatures else
Forsook me, you believe I am that wretch,
Who has renounced her God—
*(*RAIMOND *is silent).* Oh! it is hard!

RAIMOND.

And is it true you never dealt in magic?

JOANNA.

I deal in magic!

RAIMOND.

And these miracles?
Have you performed them by the power of God
And his most holy saints?

JOANNA.

How could I else?

RAIMOND.

Why were you silent, when the hideous charge
Was urged against you? Now you speak, but then,
Before the king, when speaking would avail,
Your lips were closed.

JOANNA.

I did submit myself
In silence to the destiny, which God,
My righteous master, hung around my head.

RAIMOND.

You could not answer when your father spoke!

JOANNA.

My father's voice seemed as the voice of God,
And the probation will be fatherly.

RAIMOND.

Heaven did itself bear witness of your crime.

JOANNA.

Since heaven in thunder spake, I closed my lips.

RAIMOND.

Why, when one word would clear you, should you leave
The world in this most lamentable error?

JOANNA.

It was not error, it was destiny.

RAIMOND.

You suffered all this shame, being innocent,
And not one word of plaint escaped your lips!
I'm wrapt in wonder and astonishment,
And in my deepest bosom heaves my heart!
Oh! with what joy I now believe your words,
For it went hard with me to think you guilty.
But could I dream that any human heart
Would bear in silence such a monstrous charge?

JOANNA.

Should I deserve to be the ambassadress
Of heaven, nor blindly work my master's will?
I am not so unhappy as thou deem'st;
'Tis true I suffer want, but for my rank
That is no hardship: they have thrust me forth
An exile: in the barren wilderness
I learn to know myself. Then, when the blaze
Of worldly honours circled me around,
Then was the conflict of my soul, I then
Was most unhappy, when I seemed to all

Most worthy to be envied. But I now
Am healed, and this wide-wasting hurricane,
Which seemed to you so dreadful, was my friend.
It has made pure the air and myself too.
My mind is now at peace; come what come may,
I feel no weakness cling about my heart.

RAIMOND.

Oh! come, come! let us haste, and openly
To all the world make known your innocence!

JOANNA.

He, who did tie the knot, knows how to loose it.
The fruit of fate falls only when 'tis ripe;
A day will come to clear my innocence.
And they, who now have thrust me forth in scorn,
Will rue their error, and with bitter tears
Bewail the woes of my unhappy fate.

RAIMOND.

And shall I wait in silence, till some chance—

JOANNA *(gently grasping his hand).*

Thine eye sees but the outward side of things,
So thick a film o'erspreads the visual ray:
I have beheld the saints throned in the blaze
Of highest heaven.—Without God not a hair
Falls from the head of man.—See yonder sun
Sink in the western sky:—But with the morn
He sure returns and tricks his beams anew,
So sure will time distinguish false from true!

[*Queen* ISABELLE, *with soldiers, appears in the back-ground.*

ISABELLE *(still behind the scene).*

This is the way into the English camp!

RAIMOND.

Ah me! the enemy!

Soldiers come up; as they are coming forward, they observe JOANNA, *and start back affrighted.*

ISABELLE.

Why halts the march?

SOLDIERS.

Oh! heaven preserve us!

ISABELLE.

Does some ghost affright you?
What, are ye soldiers?—cowards rather! How!
[*She presses through the ranks and comes forward. As soon as she sees the Maiden, she draws back.*
What do I see!
[*She soon recovers herself, and goes towards her.*
Thou art my prisoner!

JOANNA.

I am. [RAIMOND *flies with signs of despair.*

ISABELLE.

Bind her in chains! secure her fast!
[*The soldiers approach timidly to* JOANNA; *she stretches out her arms to be chained.*
Is this the dreaded maid, the mighty one!
Who drove our troops like timorous lambs before her!
Now all unable to defend herself.
Can she do wonders only when she finds

Fools weak enough to tremble and believe,
And when she meets a man trembles herself.
(To the Maiden). Why didst thou leave the Dauphin's troops, and where
Stays the Count Dunois, thy protecting knight?

JOANNA.

I am outlawed.

ISABELLE.

Impossible! outlawed!
And by the Dauphin?

JOANNA.

Ask me not, I am
At thy disposal—fix my destiny.

ISABELLE.

Outlawed! when thou hast saved him from the abyss!
The royal crown at Rheims placed on his brow!
And given the realm of France into his hands!
Outlawed! Aye, there I recognize my son.
—Convey her to the camp. Shew to the troops
This fearful ghost, who chased them in the field.
She an enchantress! All her magic power
Is but your folly and your coward hearts.
She is a very *fool*, who for her king
Has made herself an offering, and for this
Receives a king's reward.—Bring her to Lionel.
I send him France's genius bound in chains,
Soon will I follow her.

JOANNA.

To Lionel!
Slay me this instant! do not send me thither!

ISABELLE.

Do, as I gave command. Away with her! [*Exit.*

JOANNA.

Englishmen! do not suffer me with life
To 'scape your hands. Kill me! avenge yourselves,
Draw forth your swords, plunge them into my heart!
And drag me lifeless to your general's feet!
Think it was I, who slew your bravest men
In battle with my pitiless, bloody sword.
'Twas by my hand rivers of English blood
Were shed, by me how many Englishmen
Ne'er shall behold their much-loved homes again!
Inflict your bloodiest vengeance on my head!
You have me now; you may not always find
My arm so weak.

OFFICER OF THE SOLDIERS.

Do, as the queen commands.

JOANNA.

Must I sink deeper still in wretchedness!
Virgin severe! thy hand lies heavy on me.
Am I bereft entirely of thy grace?
No God appears, no angel shews himself,
Heaven shuts the gates of mercy on my soul.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The French camp.

DUNOIS *between the* ARCHBISHOP *and* DU CHATEL.

ARCHBISHOP.

Subdue, my prince, this gloominess of soul.
Come with us, come! return unto our king!
Do not desert the general cause in such
A trying hour, when, with new dangers pressed,
We feel the need of your heroic arm.

DUNOIS.

Why are we pressed? Why does the foe again
Raise up his head? All was accomplished,
France was victorious, and the war was ended.
You have proscribed our great deliverer,
Now save yourselves! But I will ne'er again
Visit the camp, where she no longer is.

DU CHATEL.

My prince, take better counsel, do not leave us,
With such an answer.

DUNOIS.

Hold thy peace, Du Chatel.
I hate thee, let me hear thy words no more,
'Twas thou, who first didst hint thy horrid doubts.

ARCHBISHOP.

Who did mistake her not, who could remain
Firm and unbiassed on that luckless day,

When heaven against her seemed to testify?
We were surprized, confounded, on our hearts
The blow fell like a thunderbolt. Who could
In such an hour of horror weigh the proofs?
Our better judgment now returns to us,
We see the life, which she amongst us led,
And find no blame in her. We are perplexed,
And fear that we have done a grievous wrong.
The king is greatly penitent, the duke
Much blames himself, La Hire is comfortless,
And every heart is plunged in deepest grief.

DUNOIS.

She a deceiver! If in earthly shape
Truth would sojourn, she must her features wear.
If innocence and purity of heart
Find on this earth a dwelling, they must dwell
Upon her lips, and in her heavenly eyes.

ARCHBISHOP.

May heaven enlighten by a miracle
Our doubtful minds, and clear this mystery,
Which to our mortal eyes is wrapt in night.
But howsoe'er the mystery be solved,
One way or other, we have greatly sinned:
Either we have by magic arts of hell
Conquered in battle, or proscribed a saint.
And either crime calls the avenging God
To visit with his wrath this wretched land.

Enter a Nobleman.

NOBLEMAN.

A shepherd youth requests to see your highness;
He seems most anxious with yourself to speak:
He says he brings news of the Maid of Arc—

DUNOIS.

Haste, lead him in! he comes from her!

[*The Nobleman opens the door to* RAIMOND. DUNOIS *hastens to meet him.*

Where is she?
Where is the maiden?

RAIMOND.

Hail, most noble prince!
Happy am I to find this pious bishop,
The holy man, the refuge of the oppressed,
The stay of the forsaken, by your side.

DUNOIS.

Where is the maiden?

ARCHBISHOP.

Say, my son, where is she?

RAIMOND.

My noble lord, she is no foul enchantress,
This before God and all his holy saints
I can avouch. The people are deceived.
You have proscribed her, without fault or crime,
You have thrust out the ambassadress of heaven.

DUNOIS.

Where is she? tell us.

RAIMOND.

I accompanied
Her flight into the forest of Ardennes—
There she made known her inmost thoughts to me.
I'll give my body to the rack, my soul,
May it ne'er taste the holy joys of heaven,
If she is not, my lord, pure of all guilt.

DUNOIS.

The sun itself in heaven is not more pure!
Where is she? speak!

RAIMOND.

Oh! if all-gracious heaven
Has turned your hearts—then haste to rescue her.
She is a prisoner in the English camp!

DUNOIS.

A prisoner, say you?

ARCHBISHOP.

Ah! unhappy maid!

RAIMOND.

Deep in the forest, where we sought for shelter,
Queen Isabelle herself, roaming the wood,
Seized her, and bore her to the English camp:
Oh! rescue her, she oft has rescued you.
Preserve her from an ignominious death!

DUNOIS.

To arms! sound an alarum! beat the drums!
Lead all the troops to battle! Let all France
Put armour on! Our honour's pledged, the crown,
The dear Palladium of the land, is stolen.

Set your heart's blood, your lives upon the cast!
Free must she be before the setting sun. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A watch-tower, above an opening.

JOANNA *and* LIONEL.

FASTOLF *(hastily entering).*

The people can no longer be restrained,
They eagerly demand the maiden's death.
In vain you would oppose them. Take her life,
And throw her head down from the battlements.
Nought but her blood can satisfy the troops.

ISABELLE *(comes in).*

They place the ladders, and begin the assault,
Content the people's wishes. Would you wait,
Till their blind rage has overthrown the tower,
And with it we ourselves all go to ruin?
You cannot save her—therefore give her up.

LIONEL.

Let them storm on! let them vent all their rage!
These walls are strong, and in their ruinous heaps
I'll make my tomb, sooner than grant their will.
—Joanna, answer me. Wilt thou be mine,
And I'll defend thee 'gainst a world in arms.

ISABELLE.

Are you a man?

LIONEL.

Thy people have disowned thee;
To thine unworthy country thou dost owe
Duty and faith no longer. Those brave wooers,
Who sought thy hand, have all deserted thee,
Nor dared the knightly combat for thy fame.
But I, against my people and thine own,
Assert thy honour. Once thou gavest me cause
To think my life was dear to thee, and then
I stood against thee in the field, but now
Thou hast no friend on earth but me.

JOANNA.

Thou art
The foe, the hated foe of this dear land;
Between us there can be no fellowship.
Ne'er can I love thee, but if thou incline
In kindness to me, give my people peace.
Draw off thine army from this land, restore
The keys of all the cities ye have ta'en,
Make good your lawless robberies, set free
The prisoners, send us hostages of this
Our solemn compact, then I offer thee,
In my king's name, a firm and lasting peace.

ISABELLE.

What! wilt thou in thy bonds give laws to us?

JOANNA.

Do it betimes, for ye must one day do it.
France ne'er will bear the weight of English chains.
Ne'er can this be! Sooner than this, she'd make
Herself a grave to swallow up your hosts.

Your best and bravest men are fall'n, think then
How to return in safety, your renown
Is lost, your mighty power is gone for ever.

ISABELLE.

How can you brook this scornful insolence?

[*A Captain comes in haste.*

CAPTAIN.

Haste, general, haste, lead out the troops to battle,
The Franks come on with ensigns high advanced,
And their bright arms enlighten all the vale.

JOANNA *(in extacy)*.

My valiant Franks will conquer, and myself
Must die, the brave no longer need mine arm.

LIONEL.

I laugh to scorn these puling rogues! we have
In twenty battles chased them from the field,
Before this valiant maiden fought for them.
I do despise the nation, all except
Herself, and her they have proscribed.—Come Fastolf,
We'll give these Frenchmen such a day as once
They saw at Cressy and Poictiers: you, queen,
Stay in this tower and guard the maiden, till
The battle is decided; I will leave
A band of fifty knights to tend your person.

FASTOLF.

What! shall we go to meet the enemy,
And leave behind us this our greatest foe?

JOANNA.

Does a chained woman frighten you?

LIONEL.

Joanna,
Give me thy word, thou wilt not 'scape from us.

JOANNA.

It is my heart's wish to escape your hands.

ISABELLE.

Bind her with triple chains. I pledge my life
That she shall not escape.

[*She is bound with heavy chains round her body and arms.*

LIONEL.

Thou will'st it so.
Thou dost compel us to this harshness. Yet
'Tis in thy choice, renounce thy country, bear
The English banner, and thy furious foes,
Who now thirst for thy blood, will worship thee.

FASTOLF *(eagerly).*

Away, away! my general!

JOANNA.

Spare thy words:
The French array comes on, defend thyself.

[*Trumpets sound*—LIONEL *hastens out.*

FASTOLF.

Great queen, you know your duty. If the day
Go roughly with us, if you see our people
Flee from the field—

ISABELLE *(drawing a dagger).*

Fear not, she shall not live
To see our fall.

FASTOLF *(to* JOANNA*)*.

Thou knowest the fate that waits thee.
Now pray for victory to the arms of France. [*Exit.*

JOANNA.

Yes, I will do it! no power shall stay me. Hark!
It is my people's war-march! How its notes
Thrill through my heart, and talk of victory!
Ruin to England! victory to the Franks!
On! my brave heroes, on! The maiden is
Not far from you:—she cannot, as she wont,
Your banner bear—strong fetters bind her hands.
But from her prison walls, her eager soul
Mounts on the pinions of your battle-cry.

ISABELLE *(to a soldier)*.

Soldier, go mount yon tower, which overlooks
The field, and tell us how the battle fares.

JOANNA.

Courage, my Franks! this struggle is your last.
One victory more, and the proud foe is down.

ISABELLE.

What seest thou? say.

SOLDIER.

Their ranks close on each other.
A furious knight upon a Barbary steed,
Dressed in a tiger's skin, darts from the ranks,
He leads the gendarmes.

JOANNA.

That is Count Dunois!
Fight, my brave warrior, fight! the victory's thine!

SOLDIER.

The Duke of Burgundy attacks the bridge.

ISABELLE.

Oh! that ten thousand lances were infixt
Into his heart! false traitor as he is!

SOLDIER.

Lord Fastolf meets him bravely. They alight,
They combat man to man; our English troops
And the Duke's people.

ISABELLE.

Canst thou not discern
The Dauphin and the household troops.

SOLDIER.

The field
Is all involved in dust, nought is seen clearly.

JOANNA.

Had he mine eye, or were I where he is,
Nought, even the smallest thing, should 'scape my sight.
The wild fowl I can number in their flight,
I ken the falcon soaring in the clouds.

SOLDIER.

The thickest fight is at the trench, it seems
The greatest lords and princes combat there.

ISABELLE.

Still does our banner wave?

SOLDIER.

It soars aloft.

JOANNA.

Oh! that mine eye could pierce these massy walls,
With my keen glance I would direct the battle.

SOLDIER.

Ah! woe is me! what do mine eyes behold?
Our general is surrounded.

ISABELLE *(holds the dagger over* JOANNA*)*.

Wretch, thou diest!

SOLDIER *(quick)*.

He's free! Brave Fastolf seizes from behind
The foe, he breaks into their thickest ranks.

ISABELLE *(draws back the dagger)*.

There spake thine angel.

SOLDIER.

Victory! they fly!

ISABELLE.

Who fly?

SOLDIER.

The Franks and the Burgundians fly,
The field is covered with the fugitives.

JOANNA.

O God! O God! wilt thou desert me now!

SOLDIER.

Yonder they lead a sorely wounded knight.
It is some prince, much people run to help him.

ISABELLE.

One of the enemy, or is he ours?

SOLDIER.

They loose his helmet, it is Count Dunois.

JOANNA *(grasps her chains with a convulsive effort)*.

And I am here, a useless fettered woman!

SOLDIER.

See, see! who's he, that wears the mantle, blue
And fringed with gold?

JOANNA.

It is my lord the king.

SOLDIER.

His charger starts—it plunges—tumbles down—
He struggles hard to disengage himself—

[JOANNA *accompanies the words with passionate emotion.*

Our soldiers at full speed run up to him—
Now they have reached him—now they hem him round—

JOANNA.

Oh! will no angel help me in this strait?

ISABELLE *(smiling sarcastically).*

Now is the time! Now haste to save thy king!

JOANNA *(falls upon her knees).*

Hear me, O God! hear in my greatest need!
Up to thy highest heaven I send my soul
In agony of prayer. Thou canst make strong
The threads of the light cobweb as the coils
Of the ship's cable; and thy power divine
With equal ease can change these brazen bands
Into the cobweb's thread. Speak but the word,
These chains fall off, these walls asunder burst.
Thou didst assist Sampson, when blind and weak
He bore the bitter scoffs of his proud foes.
On thee relying, he with mighty hand

Grasping the posts of Dagon's temple, tugged
The unholy edifice, till down it fell.

SOLDIER.

Victory! victory!

ISABELLE.

What now?

SOLDIER.

The king
Is taken!

JOANNA *(leaps up).*

So may God have mercy on me!

[*She had seized the chains with both hands, and snapped them. At the same moment, she falls upon the soldier standing nearest to her, wrests the sword from his hand, and hurries out. All look after her with stupid astonishment.*

ISABELLE.

What! did I dream? What is become of her?
How did she break these massy iron chains?
Not all the world would I believe, had not
Myself with mine own eyes beheld the sight.

SOLDIER *(on the tower).*

How! has she wings? Has she been carried down
Upon a whirlwind?

ISABELLE.

Speak, is she below?

SOLDIER.

She flies into the thickest fight—her course
Is quicker than my sight:—she now is here—

Now there—she seems at once in many places—
She pierces through the ranks—all yield before her.
The Frenchmen turn and form their ranks anew.—
Ah me! what do I see? Our men throw down
Their arms, as in despair—our banners sink!

ISABELLE.

What! will she wrest the certain victory from us?

SOLDIER.

She presses straight towards the king—she now
Has reached him—see! she tears him from the press.
—Lord Fastolf falls—our general is made prisoner.

ISABELLE.

Out on thee, man! I'll hear no more—come down!

SOLDIER.

Fly, queen, with quickest speed! you are surprized,
A band of armed men approach the tower.

ISABELLE *(drawing the sword)*.

Fight cowards, fight!

Enter LA HIRE *with soldiers. On their entrance they lay down their arms before the Queen.*

LA HIRE *(approaches her reverently)*,

Submit yourself, my queen,
To power you cannot stay.—Your band of knights
Have yielded up their swords—to struggle now
Were useless;—deign to use my services.
Say, whither shall I lead your royal steps.

ISABELLE.

All places are to me indifferent,
So that I may not meet my hated son.

[*Gives up her sword, and follows him with the soldiers.*

SCENE IV.

The field of battle. Soldiers with flying banners fill the back-ground. Before them the King, and the DUKE OF BURGUNDY: JOANNA *lies in the arms of these two Princes, mortally wounded, without signs of life. They move slowly forwards.* AGNES SOREL *bursts in.*

SOREL *(throws herself on the King's bosom).*

Oh! you are rescued! you are once more mine.

KING.

I am preserved, but at what price thou seest.

[*Points to* JOANNA.

SOREL.

Joanna! heavens! she's dying!

BURGUNDY.

All is o'er!
See the departing angel—how she lies
Easy and quiet as a sleeping babe!
Upon her features plays the peace of heaven—
Her bosom heaves no longer, but the warmth
Of life still lingers in this gentle hand.

KING.

She's gone for ever! She awakes no more.

No more her eye will look on earthly things,
Already does she soar in yonder skies
A radiant angel; she beholds no more
Our grief and penitence.

SOREL.

She opes her eyes!
She lives!

BURGUNDY *(astonished).*

How! does she come back from the grave?
Does she subdue the all-destroyer, death?
See, see! she rises up! she stands!

JOANNA *(stands quite upright, and looks around).*

Where am I?

BURGUNDY.

With thine own friends, Joanna, with thy people.

KING.

Thy friends, thy king infold thee in their arms.

JOANNA *(after she has fixt her eyes long upon him).*

No, I am no enchantress! Be assured
I am not.

KING.

Thou art holy as an angel,
But our dull eye was wrapt in darkest night.

JOANNA *(looks cheerfully around her and smiles).*

And am I really with mine own again?
No more a wretched outcast and despised?
They do not curse me, they look kindly on me.
—Yes, now I see all things distinct and plain,—
That is my king, those are the royal banners—
I do not see mine own—Tell me, where is it?

I dare not come without it—to my hand
It was entrusted by my heavenly king.
Before his high throne I must lay it down;
I dare to shew it, for I bore it true.

KING *(with averted face).*

Give her the banner.

[*They reach it to her. She stands quite free and upright, with the banner in her hand. The sky is lighted up with a roseate glow.*

JOANNA.

Behold yon glorious rainbow in the air!
Heaven opes its golden doors, the angelic quires
Stand in their glittering robes; upon her breast
She holds the eternal son, and smiling points
Her arms towards me.—Yes! I come, I come!
How is't with me? Clouds lift me from the earth,
The heavy mail is changed to buoyant plumes.
I mount, I mount,—earth lessens to my view,
Short is the pang, eternal is the bliss.

[*The banner drops from her hands—she falls down dead. All stand long in speechless emotion. Upon a slight intimation from the King, all the banners are laid gently upon her, so that she is entirely covered.—The curtain drops.*

FINIS.

ERRATA.

P. xxv., line 8, *For* Catholocism; *read* Catholicism.
P. 64, l. 11, from the bottom, *for*, The flatterer came not there; *read*, Thither no flatterer came.
P. 81, l. 17, *for*, Which towards you first 'waked; *read*, Which first towards you waked.
P. 82, last line, *after* move, *dele* comma.
P. 141, l. 15, *For* kind; *read* kindly.
P. 143, l. 9, *For* these; *read* those.
P. 146, l. 8, *after* abyss; *dele* point.
P. 165, l. 12, *for*, It was not death she feared;
But her deliverer, the young Mortimer,
Read, It was not death she feared,
But her deliverer, the young Mortimer.
P. 171, last line, *For* kindly; *read* kind he.
P. 290, l. 15, *For* Where; *read* Where'er.
P. 314. l. 3, from the bottom, *for*, is to learn; *read*, is but to learn.
P. 316, l. 9, from the bottom, *for*, which he's deigned; *read*, which he sdeigned.

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